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PRACTICAL SERMONS,

ON

VARIOUS SUBJECTS.

In TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

By GILBERT BURNET,
Late VICAR of *Coggeshal* in *Essex*,
And MINISTER of St. *James's*, *Clerkenwell*.

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Published for the BENEFIT of
His Two Helpless ORPHANS,
A SON of about Eight Years of Age,
AND
A DAUGHTER about Seven.

LONDON:
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M.DCC.XLVII.

MVSEVM
BRITAN
NICVM

TO

Peter Ducane, Esq;

Worthy SIR,

AS Your Father was a kind and generous Benefactor to the deceased Author of these Discourses, so there can be no Name more proper than Yours to introduce them to the Publick; especially, as You have wisely chosen to trace the same plea-

ſant Paths of Charity and Benevolence, with this eminent Advantage, that to His ample Fortune and conſpicuous Virtues (with Modeſty be it ſpoken) Your own are ſuperadded.

ADULATION is frequently too groſs an Ingredient in Addreſſes of this Kind; and where that is the only Deſign, they have ever been diſtaſteful to Minds truly Great and Good. Such, Sir, is Yours: I ſhall, therefore, forbear to recite real Merit, leſt to Your delicate Taſte there ſhould appear any, even the leaſt, Tincture of ſuch ſervile Flattery.

To

DEDICATION.

To the two helpleſs Orphans, the dear Remains of the affectionate Parent, You have tenderly ſhewn a compaſſionate Regard, ſeaſonably contributing towards the Relief of the one, and more amply providing for the future Support of the other. Their tender Age renders them incapable at preſent of returning thoſe grateful Acknowledgments, ſo juſtly due. If, according to Your uſual Condeſcenſion, You will, in this publick and humble Manner, pleaſe to accept them from me, till, by the Bleſſing of Almighty God on your aſſiſting Hand, they ſhall be

taught to do it themſelves, it ſhall be ever remembered and eſteemed as a ſingular Favour, and peculiar Honour, conferred upon,

SIR,

Your moſt Obliged,

Humble Servant,

W. G. BARNES.

St. Bride's,
April 10, 1747.

THE

THE PREFACE TO THE READERS.

WE *here preſent you with the* genuine *Works of the Author; and are verily perſuaded, that the ſolid Reaſoning, true Piety, and unaffected Charity, which appear in them throughout, will render them uſeful and beneficial to the* PUBLICK *in general, as well as to our generous* SUBSCRIBERS *in particular.*

At the ſame Time we can with Pleaſure ſay, that the only Motive to this Publication, was an earneſt Deſire to bring-up in the Nurture and Admonition of the Lord, *the ſurviving Infants of the Deceaſed; whoſe ſudden Death left them deſtitute of all other Means of Subſiſtence, but what, under Providence, ſhould flow from the pure Streams of Humanity and Benevolence.*

WHATEVER Advantages, therefore, may ariſe from this Subſcription, ſhall be moſt religiouſly applied to the ſole Uſe and Benefit of the two Orphans: *And we earneſtly requeſt our generous and charitable Aſſiſtants to accept our ſincere Acknowledgments, for promoting ſo good a Work.*

IT is with the utmoſt Satisfaction we obſerve, that the Number of our Patrons hath greatly exceeded even our warmeſt Expectations. May we never forget their Work and Labour of Love! *And may that infinitely great and good Being, who has ſo expreſly declared his merciful Regard to the* Fatherleſs, *reward the humane and benevolent Promoters of this pious Undertaking; and grant, that, by the abundant Increaſe of his Grace, theſe ſerious and judicious Diſcourſes may forward the Salvation of all, into whoſe Hands they may come.*

THIS is the fervent Deſire and Prayer of

April 10, 1747. The EDITOR, *&c.*

N. B. A ſmall Number being ſtill left unſubſcribed for, they who are diſpoſed to promote this charitable Deſign, may have them of *C. Ackers*, Printer, in St. *John's-Street*.

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SERMON I.

The Miſſion and Doctrine of the Apoſtles of CHRIST aſſerted and maintained.

Preached at the VISITATION of the Right Reverend Father in GOD, EDMUND Lord Biſhop of *London*; held at *Colcheſter*, *May* 28, 1738.

MARK xvi. 20.

And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the Word with Signs following.

OUR Bleſſed Saviour, having by his Death finiſhed the great Work he had undertaken for the Salvation of Mankind, and by his Reſurrection aſſured his Diſciples of the Truth of it, juſt before his Aſcenſion into Heaven, convenes them together, and then commiſſions them to go and teach, or make Diſciples of, all Nations. But as ſuch an Undertaking could SERM. I.

SERM. I. not poſſibly ſucceed, unleſs they were aſſiſted with the Power of working Miracles, therefore Chriſt promiſeth them, that in his Name they ſhould caſt out Devils, ſpeak with new Tongues, and work many wonderful Works. And accordingly the Evangeliſt tells us in the Text, *That they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the Word with Signs following.*

THAT the Apoſtles of our Lord worked Miracles in his Name, we are aſſured of, not only from this Paſſage, but from many others in the ſacred Writings. And therefore, at preſent, taking this for granted, my Deſign is to ſhew, that we are under the ſame Obligations to believe the Doctrines they taught concerning Chriſt, as thoſe which Chriſt hath delivered himſelf; and are to receive them as divine Truths, on the ſincere Belief and Practice of which, depends our eternal Salvation.

IN a late Treatiſe, entitled, *The true Goſpel of Jeſus Chriſt aſſerted*, all this is denied; the Author of which maintains, that *the true Goſpel of Jeſus Chriſt*, or the Way, or Method, which he has taken in order to ſave Mens Souls, may be ſummed up in theſe

fol-

following Particulars; and that nothing else is to be received as Part of the Gospel. SERM. I.

" FIRST, [a] He requires and recommends " the *conforming* our *Minds* and *Lives* to " that eternal and unalterable *Rule* of *Ac-* " *tion*, which is founded in the *Reason* of " Things; and this he lays down as the " *only Ground* of *divine Acceptance*, and as " *that* which will entitle Men to the Fa- " vour of God, and the Happiness of an- " other World; and, consequently, *this* " will prevent them from being greatly and " lastingly miserable.

" SECONDLY, If Men have lived in a " *Violation* of this righteous Law, by which " they have rendered themselves highly dis- " pleasing to *God*, and worthy of his *Re-* " *sentment*; then Christ requires and re- " commends *Repentance* and *Reformation* " of their *evil* Ways, as the *only* and the " *sure Ground* of the divine *Mercy* and " *Forgiveness*. And,

" THIRDLY, In order to make those " Truths have the greater Impression on " the Minds and Lives of Men, he de- " clares, and assures them, that *God* has " appointed a *Day* in which he will *judge*

[a] Chubb's *True Gospel*, &c. *p.* 14, 15. 2d. Edit.

SERM. I. " the *World* in *Righteouſneſs*, and that he " will then either acquit or condemn, re- " ward or puniſh them, according as they " have, or have not, conformed their Minds " and Lives to that Rule of Righteouſneſs " before mentioned, and according as they " have, or have not, repented and amended " their evil Ways.

" THIS, he ſays, is *the true Goſpel of* " *Jeſus Chriſt:* For [a] not any *particular* " *private Opinion* of any, or of all the " Writers of the Hiſtory of his Life and " Miniſtry; nor any *private Opinion* of " any, or of all thoſe whom he ſent out " to publiſh his Goſpel to the World; nor " is any of their *Reaſonings*, or *Concluſions*, " founded on, or drawn from ſuch Opini- " ons, any Part of that Goſpel. And, " [b] therefore, whether Chriſt was the *Lo-* " *gos*, or *Word*, whether he was with God, " and was God, or whether he made all " Things in the Senſe in which St. *John* " uſeth thoſe Terms, or not, is of no Con- " ſequence to us; becauſe theſe Points are " no Part of Chriſt's Goſpel, and are what " the Salvation of Mankind is not in the " leaſt concerned with. Whether Chriſt " præ-

[a] Chubb's *True Goſpel*, &c. *p.* 34. 2d. Edit. [b] Ibid. *p.* 35.

" præ-exiſted, or not; or whether he was the Agent employed by God in making this viſible World, or not; are Points which do not affect the Saving of Mens Souls at all; it being ſufficient for us to know, that he was ſent of God, and that *the Word of the Lord in his Mouth was Truth.*"

SERM. I.

THUS far the *Writer:* And as he confeſſeth, that Jeſus Chriſt was ſent of God, and that *the Word of the Lord in his Mouth was Truth,* it is ſurprizing, that ſo great a *Maſter* of *Scripture* ſhould forget, that there were ſome other Truths that were to be revealed to thoſe who were to publiſh Chriſt's Goſpel, which were not proper for them to know while Chriſt was alive, but were to be told them after his Aſcenſion into Heaven. If *the Word of the Lord in his Mouth was Truth,* why is he not to be believed, when he tells his Diſciples, *I have yet many Things to ſay unto you, but ye cannot bear them now; howbeit, when He, the Spirit of Truth is come, he will guide you into all Truth?* And after ſuch a Promiſe, and ſo remarkable a Completion of it, upon the Deſcent of the Holy Ghoſt upon them, why muſt the Doctrines they taught, concerning Chriſt, be eſteemed only as their

SERM. I. private Opinions? I believe, no other Reason can be given but this; that if what the Apoſtles have taught concerning Chriſt be received as Part of the Chriſtian Doctrine, this Author muſt believe the Divinity, Redemption, Satisfaction, and Interceſſion of Chriſt; all which they have in plain Terms delivered, and of which he profeſſeth *his* Diſbelief.

BUT let his Reaſons be what they will, it is certain, upon the Suppoſition of Miracles, we have the ſame Reaſon to believe what the Apoſtles have taught us concerning Chriſt, as we have to believe what Chriſt has taught us himſelf.

THOUGH the Doctrine that Chriſt taught, is ſuch as doth ſufficiently recommend itſelf, by its own intrinſick Excellency, to the *Belief* and *Practice* of all wiſe and conſiderate Men, and is moſt agreeable to our natural Notions of God, and moſt conducive to the *Happineſs* and *Well-Being* of Men; yet, conſidering that this intrinſick Excellence would be underſtood by few, Men in general giving themſelves but little Trouble to examine into the Truth of *ſpeculative Reaſoning*; and, that if they did ſee it, yet the *Reaſonableneſs* of the *Doctrine* be-

being *no Proof* that it is from *God*, unless it was confirmed by some Testimony from Heaven; therefore, the strongest Proof of Christ's Doctrine being from God, and our Obligation to believe and practise it, ariseth from the *external Evidences*, which are the Miracles of Christ. And to this Testimony Christ himself appeals, as the great Evidence of the Divinity of his Doctrine. Thus, *John* v. 36. speaking of *John* the *Baptist*, he says, *I have greater Witness than that of John; for the Works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same Works that I do, bear Witness of me, that the Father hath sent me.* SERM. I.

AND here he not only asserts the Truth of his Doctrine, and the Validity of his Commission, by the mighty Works that he did; but he also plainly intimates, that his *bare Affirmation* did not require *Credit*; and that if he did not bring *better Proof* than his *own Word*, the *Jews* were excuseable for disbelieving him. *If I bear Witness*, says he, *of myself, my Witness is not true*[a]; and, *If I do not the Works of my Father, believe me not*[b]; and, *If I had not done*

[a] *John* v. 31. [b] *John* x. 37.

SERM. I. *among them the Works which none other Man did, they had not had Sin*[a].

NAY, the Enemies of Religion own, that, admitting thoſe Miracles were really wrought, as the Hiſtory ſets forth, then they naturally tended not only to draw the Multitude about our Lord, but alſo to call in their Attention to what he had to offer them, and carefully to conſider the *Truth* and *Reaſonableneſs* of it: And as Chriſt repreſented himſelf as a *Meſſenger* ſent from *God*; ſo *theſe Facts* were likely to be of Weight upon the Minds of the People in that Reſpect. To ſee a Man exerciſe ſuch a Power as was greatly ſuperior to any Power that is ordinarily found among Men, which Power was employed in inſtantly giving Sight to the Blind, Hearing to the Deaf, Health to the Sick, Life to the Dead, and the like; and that in Support of a Doctrine, which is *exactly conformable* to our natural Notion of Things, which is founded in *Truth* and *Reaſon*, and which is greatly ſubſervient to the preſent and future Well-being of Mankind; *this*, ſurely, muſt lead Men to *reflect* and *conſider*; and thoſe Facts muſt have Weight upon the Minds of the Spectators.

Now,

[a] *John* xv. 24.

SERM. I.

Now, if Chriſt appealed to the *Miracles* which he wrought, as a Demonſtration of his being a *Teacher ſent from God*, and that his *Doctrine* was no other than an *expreſs Revelation* of the *Will of God*, we have the ſame Reaſon to receive what his Apoſtles have taught, as what he taught himſelf; they having the ſame Teſtimony, and confirming what they taught by *Signs* and *Miracles*.

SUPPOSING, therefore, that Chriſt did not deliver to the World ſome Doctrines which his Apoſtles afterwards taught, yet, as the Foundation of our Belief, that he was ſent from God to *lead us into all Truth*, reſts upon the Teſtimony that he gave by his Miracles; as the *Jews* rightly concluded of him, *We know that thou art a Teacher come from God: For no Man can do theſe Miracles that thou doeſt, except God be with him*[a]; ſo, by the ſame Reaſon, as God gave Teſtimony unto the Word of his Grace, and granted Signs and Wonders to be done by the Hands of the Apoſtles, in the Name of Jeſus Chriſt, we are to believe whatever Doctrines they have delivered to us, even upon Suppoſition that Chriſt had not taught them.

WHEN,

[a] *John* iii. 2.

SERM. I. WHEN, therefore, it is said by St. *John*, concerning the *Dignity* of *Christ*'s *Person* and *Nature*, that *in the Beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God; the same was in the Beginning with God; all Things were made by him, and without him was not any Thing made that was made:* This ought not to be looked upon only as the *private Opinion of St.* John, and as a Thing of *no Consequence*, wherein the *Salvation of Mankind is not* in the *least concerned*; but is to be received by us as a Truth, which St. *John* was divinely commissioned to deliver to the World; that Men being thus informed of the Divinity of *Christ*'s Person, might pay him that Reverence and Worship that is due from us to him.

So also as to the *Satisfaction* of Christ, what the Apostles have delivered concerning *this Doctrine*, ought to be as equally believed as when they *preached Faith and Repentance in his Name*; because the Miracles, which they wrought, were as good a *Proof* of the *Truth* of their *Doctrine* as their *Mission*; it being incredible to suppose, that God would suffer them to work Miracles to sup-

support any Doctrine, unless the Doctrine was true. SERM. I.

It cannot indeed be denied, that the Apostles delivered some Things as their *private Opinions*; but then they took Care to let them know to whom they wrote, that they were *such*, and that they gave them only as Matters of *Advice*, and not of *Command*. But where they made no such Distinction, and where they taught Things of such Consequence, as the *Redemption*, *Divinity*, *Satisfaction*, and *Intercession* of Christ, we are obliged to receive them as Truths they received from *God*, upon the Credit of their *Miracles*, though there may be something *mysterious* in them.

Hitherto I have taken for granted, that the Miracles which are recorded in Scripture, were really wrought by those very Persons who are there mentioned; and upon that Supposition have drawn such Consequences from them, as naturally and necessarily follow from it. But as some Men seem to doubt of the Reality of them, or would dispute whether those Facts were a *strict* and *proper Proof* of the *Divinity of Christ's Mission*; or whether, when all Things are taken into the Case, they carry with them

SERM. I. them the higher Degree of Probability, that they were wrought by the Power of God, rather than by the *Agency of any other Being*; I will briefly ſhew, that there is *ſufficient Proof*, that the *Miracles* recorded *in Scripture* were really wrought, that they are a *ſtrict Proof* of the *Divinity* of *Chriſt's* and *his Apoſtles Miſſion*, and carry in them a higher Probability that they were wrought by the *Power of God*, than by the *Agency of any other* Being.

THAT theſe *Miracles* were really wrought, we have as good an Evidence as the Nature of the Thing is capable of.

BESIDES an inward Revelation from God to a Man's own Mind, there are but two Ways whereby we can be aſſured of any Matter of Fact, ſuch as *Miracles* are.

THE firſt is, the *Evidence of our Senſes*.

THE ſecond, an *unqueſtionable Record*.

THE *Evidence of Senſe* can belong to none but thoſe who ſaw the *Miracles* when they were wrought, and therefore cannot be expected at this Time.

BUT, thank God! there are *unqueſtionable Records*, which have more evident Marks of Truth than any other ancient Hiſtory in the World.

SERM. I.

THEY were written by *Persons* who were well acquainted with what they wrote, being Eye-Witnesses of the Miracles which they have recorded, having conversed from the Beginning with our Saviour himself: And that they had no Design of imposing upon others, their whole Lives and Conversations, their Sufferings and Deaths, are a Demonstration. That these Records were written at the *Time pretended*, and by *Persons* to whom they are *ascribed*, is undeniable. Besides, they were immediately dispersed into different Nations, and translated into their Languages; so that if there had been any Design to alter or corrupt them, it must certainly have been detected and exposed.

WE have also very considerable Evidence to the Facts, by *Persons* who cannot be supposed to be any-ways Parties to them. There are Passages, both in *Greek* and other ancient Authors, which accidentally confirm the Truth of these Accounts, which are recorded in the *New Testament*, in Point of *Time*, of *Persons*, and of divers *extraordinary Facts*.

AND as to the *Miracles* of our *Saviour*, none of the *ancient Enemies* of *Christianity* ever disputed their being wrought. For,

even

SERM. I. even *Celſus* and *Porphyry* themſelves, who were the *ſubtileſt Adverſaries* of *Chriſt*, have given *ſufficient Teſtimony* to them in Point of *Fact*, by the Labour and Pains they have taken in writing and publiſhing againſt them.

BUT further, the Accompliſhment of Prophecies, recorded in the *Scriptures*, is a corroborating, not to ſay, undeniable Evidence, that the Writers of them were inſpired by *God*; becauſe, without his Aſſiſtance, to whom all future Things are preſent, and every Thing naked and open, it muſt have been impoſſible for any one to have foretold the Deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*, the *Diſperſion of the* Jews, and the State of them to *this Day*, with ſo many remarkable Circumſtances that attended them.

BESIDES, ſome of the Doctrines, which are delivered in the *Goſpel Hiſtory*, are of ſuch a Nature, that, as they could not be the *Invention* of *Men*, ſo neither would they have been believed, without the Teſtimony of ſuch Miracles, as are ſaid to be wrought by thoſe, who delivered and preached them to the World.

FOR Inſtance; How was it poſſible for St. *Paul* (unleſs he had been inſpired by God)

to

to have said such sublime Things of our Blessed Lord and Saviour? How could it have entered into his Head to have imagined, that *He was the Image of the invisible God, the First-born of every Creature; that all Things were created by him that are in Heaven and Earth, visible and invisible?* And who would have believed all this of a Person who was known to be crucified, if the most surprizing and beneficent Miracles had not attended the Preachers of such a Doctrine? SERM. I.

AND therefore we may conclude, from all these Things considered together, that the Scriptures are a faithful Record of the Facts therein related, and that the Miracles there mentioned were really wrought.

How far *Miracles* may be a *Proof* of a *divine Mission*, and whether the Miracles which *Christ* and his *Apostles* wrought, are a strict Proof of theirs, is next to be considered.

THOUGH we should allow, that Miracles may be done by a *less* Power than *divine Omnipotence*, (since we know not what *Degrees of Power God* may communicate to *other Creatures)* yet, as he is the Governor of the World, we cannot suppose, that he would

SERM. I. would ſuffer any Doctrine, that ſhould be preached in his Name, to be confirmed by Miracles, if the Doctrine was not from him; becauſe, in ſuch a Caſe, for God to ſuffer *evil Spirits* to deceive Men, would be the ſame Thing as if he wrought Miracles himſelf to deceive them.

INDEED, it cannot be denied, but that God doth ſometimes permit Miracles to be wrought for the *countenancing* a *falſe Doctrine:* In the *Old Teſtament*, *Moſes* provides againſt it as a Caſe that might happen; and in the *New Teſtament*, our *Bleſſed Saviour* expreſly foretels it. But then, God never permits Miracles to be wrought for the *Confirmation* of a *falſe Doctrine*, but he affords ſufficient Marks, whereby thoſe who are *free* and *impartial Enquirers after Truth*, and *ſincere Lovers of it*, may diſtinguiſh *Truth* from *Impoſture*.

EITHER the Doctrine, they are wrought to confirm, is to promote and encourage the Worſhip of falſe Gods, which no Miracles are ſufficient to eſtabliſh; or it tends to propagate Vice and Wickedneſs in the World; and then the *neceſſary Difference* between *Good* and *Evil* is of more Force to prove the

the Doctrine falſe, than any Miracles can prove it to be true. SERM. I.

INDEED, could we ſuppoſe ſuch a Doctrine ſupported by a Series of manifeſt Miracles, univerſally acknowledged to be above the Power of Nature, and more in Number, and greater in Effect, than thoſe which were wrought for the Confirmation of the *Chriſtian Religion*, we ſhould be at a Loſs what to conclude; but this is a Suppoſition that never was in Fact true, nor ever can be, if God has thoſe Perfections of Goodneſs and Veracity we aſcribe to him. All the Miracles which are ſaid to have been done in the Heathen World, are very few; and they not ſupported by ſuch unqueſtionable Evidence as thoſe of Chriſt and his Apoſtles.

BUT, ſuppoſing them to have been really wrought, it concerned the Divine Goodneſs to reſtrain ſuch Powers from performing ſuch Things as tended to deceive Men, and weaken the Proof of a Divine Miſſion from the Evidence of Miracles. Upon which Account it is not unreaſonable to conclude, he did do it, and that moſt of their Miracles were Impoſitions upon the World.

SERM. I.

BUT Christ's Miracles were openly performed in the Presence of great Multitudes, who could not have been deceived, if there had been any Trick or Juggle in them; and, besides, they were of such a Nature, as unanswerably proved, that they could not be performed by any Agents inferior to God, or without his Permission; for who could raise the Dead, as Christ and his Apostles evidently did, and recal the Soul to its deserted Mansion, but that Almighty Being, by whose Word we were at first raised into Life and Being?

BUT, together with the Miracles, if we consider the *Ends* for which those of Christ and his Apostles were wrought, there can be no further Question of their being a certain Proof of a Divine Mission.

THEY were wrought for the more effectual Confirmation of Men in the Belief of the only true God; to encourage Piety and Virtue in the World; and to promote the Peace and Happiness of Mankind.

SUCH were the *Ends* of the Miracles recorded in the *New Testament*; which are too good and beneficial to Men to be deemed the Works of evil Beings; who, were they able, would be unwilling to do

such

ſuch Things: No, ſuch Works can proceed only from God, who uſeth them as Inſtruments of his Glory, and Arguments of his Goodneſs to his own Diſpenſation. SERM. I.

FROM what has been ſaid, I hope, it hath been proved, that we have the ſame Reaſon to receive what the Apoſtles have taught concerning Chriſt, upon the Evidence of their Miracles, as they and we have to receive what our Saviour taught them: Though this may be a Concluſion, the Enemies of Chriſtianity will by no Means admit; who ſeem to ſet aſide Miracles, if not as uſeleſs, yet, as adding very little Weight, when the Doctrines, which they are wrought to confirm, are founded upon Truth and Reaſon.

THIS ſeems to be their real Deſign; and if they could once gain ſo much as to ſet aſide what the Apoſtles have taught of Chriſt, though confirmed by Miracles, as their private Opinions only; their next Concluſion would be this, *viz.* That as our Belief in, and Obligation to practiſe that which Chriſt hath taught, ariſeth from its being founded in the Nature and Reaſon of Things, it would be no Matter whether he worked Miracles, or not; the Truth of

SERM. I. what he had delivered being already eſtabliſhed in the Nature and Reaſon of Things: And, by this Means, they would level the Authority of our Saviour with the Writings of the ancient Moraliſts, and allow him no more Credit than they would give to *Socrates* or *Plato*.

THIS is the moſt of ſuch Mens Belief; and from hence ariſeth all that Rancour and Malice, with which they purſue thoſe amongſt us, who have more eminently diſtinguiſhed themſelves in Defence of the Chriſtian Cauſe; and thoſe Calumnies and Slanders, with which they labour to deſtroy their perſonal Reputation.

BUT, inſtead of returning Railing for Railing, let us, in Imitation of our Bleſſed Maſter, pray for our Enemies, and for thoſe that deſpitefully uſe us; and beg of God, that he would give them the Grace of Humility, that they may receive with Meekneſs the engrafted Word, which is able to ſave their Souls. For, after all, it is the Pride of thinking out of the common Road, and the Vanity and Affectation of being thought of ſuperior Underſtanding, that makes ſo many Converts to Infidelity.

THEY

THEY pretend, indeed, to Argument and Demonstration, and object against Religion, as wanting rational Proofs to support it; but whosoever looks into their Writings, will be soon convinced, that they are rather a licentious Babbling against Religion, with malicious Words, than any sober Enquiry about it. SERM. I.

THAT Love of Truth, which they would persuade us, is the real Motive of their Enquiries, immediately degenerates into gross Partiality and unfair Examination: And, to bias the *unwary Reader* on their Side, they betake themselves to Reflections on the Clergy, to Banter and impious Buffoonery.

SOMETIMES, when their Occasions require it, we are represented as ignorant and illiterate to a scandalous Degree.

AT other Times, our Learning offends them, and we are objected against, as *Corrupters* of the *Holy Scriptures*, by our Comments and Interpretations upon them.

THUS, my Brethren, we are sure, one Way or other, of being insulted by them. But let us hold fast the Profession of our Faith without wavering, and preach those Truths with Boldness which were delivered with such Testimony of the Spirit of God.

SERM. I. AND, that our Enemies may have no plauſible Exception againſt us, let our Lives and Converſations be anſwerable to the Purity of that Doctrine we preach to others; that we, by well doing, may put to Silence the Ignorance of fooliſh Men.

SER-

SERMON II.

On Self-Conviction.

GEN. xlii. 21.

And they ſaid one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our Brother, in that we ſaw the Anguiſh of his Soul, when he beſought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this Diſtreſs come upon us.

THERE is ſomething ſo uncommon, ſo very moving, in the Hiſtory of *Joſeph* and his Brethren, that we cannot well read it without great Concern, and participating of the Diſtreſs; without being deeply affected, and that too, in an extraordinary Manner. SERM. II.

IT may not therefore be diſagreeable to take a particular View of the Whole, and make ſuch Reflections as may naturally riſe from the Subject itſelf.

SERM. II.

WHAT gave the first Occasion to the Conspiracy of the ten Sons of *Jacob* against their *Brother*, was this: *Rachel*, the beloved Wife of their Father, being dead, the good old Man transfers all his Passion and Affection for her to her two Sons, particularly to *Joseph*, who was the eldest; which so increased every Day, that it shewed itself in a visible Partiality and Tenderness for him.

THIS Preference of the Father, by Degrees, so wrought upon the Minds of his other Children, that they entered at last into that wicked Design of destroying that *Favourite*, who had engrossed all the Affection and Love of their Father.

THIS Conduct in the Father (though made use of by Providence, to bring about one of the greatest Events that ever happened) was, nevertheless, in regard to *Jacob*, imprudent and criminal; because, as they were all his Children, he should have shewed an equal Affection and Favour to them all.

AND this Part of the Story ought to be a Lesson to all Parents, that they shew not a particular Regard to one in Preference to their other Children; which seldom fails

to

to create Jealouſies and Animoſities among them whilſt they are growing up; and too frequently ends in their mutual Diſcontent and Unhappineſs when of riper Years. Serm. II.

And it may alſo be an Inſtruction to Children, as ſoon as they are grown up, to reflect, that the beſt of Parents have their Infirmities; that it is their Duty to be obedient; and, that if they be not firſt in their Eſteem, it may proceed from a Defect in their Behaviour, rather than from a Want of Affection in their Parent.

But to proceed: The long concealed Hatred and Malice againſt their Brother, which was greatly increaſed by his Interpretation of two Dreams, that God was pleaſed to reveal to him, burſt out upon that Opportunity given them to deſtroy him, when he came from his Father to know how they and the Flocks fared. *And when they ſaw him afar off, even before he came near unto them, they conſpired againſt him to ſlay him. And they ſaid one to another; Behold, this Dreamer cometh. Come now therefore, and let us ſlay him, and caſt him into ſome Pit; and we will ſay, ſome evil Beaſt hath devoured*

SERM. II.

voured him; and we ſhall ſee what will become of his Dreams[a].

WHICH horrid Reſolution they had certainly executed, had not *Reuben* (who ſeems to have been abſent when they contrived the Murder) diverted them from their wicked Deſign, by artfully propoſing another Expedient. *And Reuben ſaid unto them, Shed no Blood, but caſt him into this Pit that is in the Wilderneſs, and lay no Hand upon him*[b]; deſigning, (as the Event[c] ſhewed) at a convenient Opportunity, to releaſe him, and deliver him to his Father.

HAVING approved of *Reuben*'s Advice, they ſeized their Brother as ſoon as he came up unto them, ſtript him of his hated Garment of many Colours, and caſt him into a Pit, to die of Thirſt and Hunger.

BUT ſome *Iſhmaelite* Merchants providentially paſſing by; *Judah ſaid unto his Brethren, What Profit is it, if we ſlay our Brother, and conceal his Blood? Come, and let us ſell him to the Iſhmaelites, and let not our Hand be upon him; for he is our Brother, and our Fleſh; and his Brethren were con-*

[a] *Gen.* xxxvii. 18, 19, 20. [b] Compare *Chap.* xlii. 22, with this. [c] *Ver.* 22.

content,—and they ſold him to the Iſhmaelites for twenty Pieces of Silver[a]. SERM. II.

Having thus got rid of their Father's hateful Favourite; their next Care was, how they might hide their villainous Proceeding from the Knowledge of *Jacob*; which was, by ſhewing his Coat, which they had ſprinkled with the Blood of a Kid, as a Proof of his being devoured by ſome evil Beaſt.

What Anxiety and Diſtreſs muſt not the aged Father have been in, when he ſaw that Coat, which his partial Fondneſs had prepared to adorn his beloved Child, thus ſtained, as he imagined, with his Blood! But his Anguiſh cannot be more pathetically deſcribed than in the Words of the ſacred Writer: *And Jacob rent his Cloaths, and put Sackcloth upon his Loins, and mourned for his Son many Days. And all his Sons, and all his Daughters, roſe up to comfort him; but he refuſed to be comforted; and he ſaid, For I will go down into the Grave unto my Son, mourning.*

The Sons of *Jacob*, having thus deceived their unhappy Father, ſeemed now to

[a] *Ver.* 26, 27, 28.

SERM. II. to be ſecure, and, without doubt, pleaſed themſelves in the Reflection of being ſafe from any future Diſcovery. *Joſeph*, they looked upon as no more, or, at leaſt, in no Capacity of doing them any Diſſervice. As for their Conſciencies, they ſeemed to be lulled aſleep, or too hardened to be affected with any ſecret Remorſe.

BUT the Time was haſtening on, when they were with Anguiſh to recollect the Injury they had done their innocent Brother, and condemn themſelves for that impious Action.

THE *Famine*, which God had made *Joſeph* his Inſtrument of foretelling to *Pharaoh*, and againſt which the King had appointed him to make Proviſion, now raged in the Countries adjoining to *Egypt*; who, in ſome Time, having conſumed their Stores, were obliged to go down to *Egypt* to buy Corn.

AMONG the reſt that came there, appeared the Brethren of *Joſeph*, whom *Jacob* had ſent to buy Corn.

JOSEPH, who knew them perfectly well, though he was unknown to them, being in a Situation of Life infinitely above what they could have imagined a Brother, whom

whom they had ſold for a Slave, could ever have arrived at, addreſſed himſelf to them in particular, and ſpoke with a Roughneſs that greatly ſurprized them: He examined them ſtrictly who they were, and what was the true Intent of their coming? When they had anſwered, that they were of *Canaan*, and that they were obliged, by the Preſſure of the Famine, to come down to *Egypt* to purchaſe Corn for the Support of themſelves and Families; he told them, that he believed, they came upon ſome bad Deſign, and that they were even Spies, ſent to ſee the Nakedneſs of the Land. SERM. II.

To which they anſwered, that they had no ſuch View; that far from being ſent as Spies, or being able to make any Attempt upon the Country, they were no other than the Sons of a private Man, that they were once twelve in Number, but that one was not, and that the other was too young to travel with them.

But, notwithſtanding this, *Joſeph* would ſtill look upon them as Spies, and as ſuch confined them in Priſon three Days; after which he commanded them to be brought into his Preſence again, and told them, that, as they informed him, they were the Sons

of

SERM. II. of one Man, and that they had a younger Brother with their Father, by this he would ſee, whether they were really what they pretended: *If ye be true Men*, ſays he, *let one of your Brethren be bound in the Houſe of your Priſon; but, go ye, carry Corn for the Famine of your Houſes* [a].

BEFORE he had confined them in Priſon, he told them, that only one of them ſhould have Leave to fetch his Brother, and that the other ſhould be confined till his Return [b]: But, without Doubt, conſidering afterwards, what an Affliction it muſt needs be to his Father, to be, as it were, deprived of almoſt all his Children at once, and that, poſſibly, the Greatneſs of the Trial might cut off the little Remnant of his Life; he detained only *Simeon*, by Way of an innocent Revenge for their unnatural Attempt upon his Life; and, perhaps, he pitched upon him, as he might have been the moſt forward of his Brethren, when they conſpired againſt him.

UPON this Determination his Brethren were under great Perplexity and Anxiety of Mind; and, perhaps, reflecting withal, that he had uſed no other Perſons, who were come

[a] *Gen.* xlii. 19. [b] *Ver.* 16.

come to buy Corn, in this cruel Manner, could not but eſteem this ſevere Treatment as a Judgment upon them from God, for their Cruelty towards their Brother. Serm. II.

AND they ſaid one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our Brother, in that we ſaw the Anguiſh of his Soul, when he beſought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this Diſtreſs come upon us.

We have in theſe Words the moſt moving Repreſentation of the Self-Conviction of wicked Men; and of that impartial Judgment they paſs upon themſelves, concerning the juſt Puniſhments and Afflictions which they ſuffer. And, if we conſider the Matter rightly, we ſhall find that it muſt be ſo.

For as there is a real Difference between *Good* and *Evil*, and as every Man is naturally conſcious of this Difference, ſo no one ever commits any Wickedneſs; but he ſecretly condemns himſelf, and is conſcious he deſerves to be puniſhed. He may divert and turn away his Thoughts from the unpleaſing Subject by Variety of Amuſements: He may flatter himſelf, as he pleaſeth, with Objections againſt the *unalterable Difference of Virtue and Vice*; and may confidently and preſumptuouſly diſpute, that all Actions

are

Serm. II. are alike; and, that Morality is nothing but a Fiction of ſpeculative Men: But he can never really perſuade himſelf that it is ſo; the Law written in his Heart will convict him of the Difference between Good and Evil, though he may be unwilling to make it the Rule of his Actions.

So, on the other Hand, the Lovelineſs and Beauty of Virtue is ſo evident, that every good Action a Man doth, makes him, as it were, have a greater Eſteem and Value for himſelf, and will be an unſpeakable Comfort to him in the Day of Affliction.

Thus, when God was pleaſed to ſend thoſe ſevere Afflictions upon holy *Job*, as a Trial of his ſtedfaſt and unſhaken Virtue; though the Calamities were very great, yet they were ſupportable, becauſe he had the Comfort of a good Conſcience in the Midſt of his Sufferings.

He had been all his Days an upright Man, and was determined to continue ſuch for the future, let whatſoever would happen. *As God liveth*, ſays he, *who hath taken away my Judgment; and the Almighty, who hath vexed my Soul; all the while my Breath is in me, and the Spirit of God is in my Noſtrils, my Lips ſhall not ſpeak Wickedneſs,*

edneſs, nor my Tongue utter Deceit—till I die, I will not remove my Integrity from me. My Righteouſneſs I hold faſt, and will not let it go; my Heart ſhall not reproach me ſo long as I live[a].—*And though he ſlay me, yet will I truſt in him; but I will maintain my own Ways before him: He alſo ſhall be my Salvation.*

Serm. II.

These Conſiderations greatly alleviated the unparalleled Afflictions of this good Man: And the Comforts of an honeſt Heart, and a good Conſcience, will always bear a Man up under every Trouble of Life. *If our Heart condemn us not*; if we can ſatisfy ourſelves, upon an impartial Review of our Lives, that we have been ſincere Followers of Truth and Virtue, and have *lived ſoberly and righteouſly in this preſent World*; *then may we have Confidence towards God, and may aſſure our Hearts before him. Then ſhalt thou have Delight in the Almighty, and ſhalt lift up thy Face unto God.*

But of all Conſolations, which a good Conſcience gives us, the greateſt is that, which it affords in Sickneſs, and at the Hour of Death. At that Time Men ſtand

[a] *Job* xxvii. 2, 3, &c.

Serm. II. in Need of the greateſt Support to keep up and comfort their Spirits. And there is nothing that can ſo revive the languiſhing Spirits of a dying Man, as the Reflection on a well ſpent Life. The Conſciouſneſs that he hath ſincerely endeavoured to walk in all the Commandments of the Lord blameleſs, cheers his Mind, and clears up the gloomy Proſpect before him.

But, on the other Hand, a wounded Conſcience is the moſt inſupportable Evil; it doubles every Affliction we meet with in Life, and overwhelms us with inexpreſſible Terrors when we come to die.

A wicked Man falls into no Misfortunes, but his Conſcience condemns him; and he cannot but ſuppoſe them Judgments ſent for the Sins he hath committed.

The Priſon, that *Joſeph* caſt his Brethren into, was not near ſo dark and horrid, as the Reflections that it raiſed in their guilty Breaſts: And if our Conſciences can accuſe us of any unjuſt Deed, they will act the ſame Part againſt us, that *Reuben* did againſt his Brethren. *And Reuben anſwered them, ſaying, Spake I not unto you, ſaying, Do not ſin againſt the Child; and ye would*

would not hear? Therefore, behold, alſo his Blood is required[a]. SERM. II.

And, without Doubt, it was a great Comfort to *Reuben*, in thoſe miſerable Circumſtances, that he could acquit himſelf of having had any bad Deſign againſt his Brother.

Whereas, when the Afflictions of Life fall upon wicked Men, their Conſciences, which ſhould be their Conſolation, ſting and upbraid them, ſharpen and augment their Troubles.

In all other Caſes, the Spirit of a Man will ſuſtain his Infirmity; but when the Spirit itſelf is thus wounded, who can bear it? *For the Arrows of the Almighty are within them, the Poiſon whereof drinketh up their Spirits; the Terrors of the Lord do ſet themſelves in aray againſt them.*

The miſerable State of bad Men is very ſtrongly deſcribed by *Iſaiah*[b]: *The Wicked*, ſays he, *are like the troubled Sea, when it cannot reſt, whoſe Waters caſt up Mire and Dirt.* A Metaphor that expreſſeth every Thing that can ſet forth the tumultuous State of a guilty Mind.

[a] *Gen.* xlii. 22. [b] *Iſaiah* lvii. 20.

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BUT the moſt miſerable Condition of wicked Men is, when they come to die; then their Conſcience, which before, perhaps, they had lulled aſleep, will rouze itſelf up, and upbraid them with all the Crimes and Wickedneſs of their Lives. They will not, at that Time, be able to ſtill its Clamours; it will impartially give Judgment againſt them, and fill them with unſpeakable Terror and Amazement.

AND if this will be the Caſe, let us endeavour to keep a Conſcience void of Offence, both towards God and towards Man. The Pleaſure and Satisfaction of Mind that follows good Actions, will reward us well for any Difficulty we may meet with in performing them; ſo that we ſhall never repent of our Bargain. Our Conſcience will be at Eaſe; and that will give us more real Pleaſure than all the boaſted Enjoyments of Sin; which are ſo far from adding to the Sum of Happineſs, that they are the very Bane and Deſtruction of all true Felicity: They render a Man uneaſy to himſelf, troubleſome to his Neighbour, and hateful to God; which is ſuch a miſerable Situation of Life, that no Man, unleſs void of all Senſe and Reaſon, would ever deſire.

IF

If any one can poſſibly be ſo weak as to think, that he may bribe his Conſcience to approve, or, at leaſt, not condemn his ſinful Actions, he will certainly find himſelf deceived; for as his Conſcience is perfectly well acquainted with his Actions, and the Motives and Reaſons of them, ſo will it paſs a fair and impartial Judgment upon them. Serm. II.

Indeed, a Man may, at Times, have ſo hardened his Heart, by an habitual Courſe of Sin, that his Conſcience may become uſeleſs; but then this is ſuch a deplorable State, as, of all others, we ſhould dread falling into; not only as it is inexcuſable, when arrived at, and moſt provoking to God; but, becauſe, in ſuch Perſons, it very rarely leaves Room for an Eſcape or Remedy.

Let us therefore exhort one another, leſt any of us be hardened through the Deceitfulneſs of Sin.

Let us flee from it, as *from the Face of a Serpent; for the Teeth thereof are as the Teeth of a Lion, ſlaying the Souls of Men.*

SERMON III.

Concerning the NATURE of the SERPENT and its POWER.

GEN. iii. 13. latter Part.

The Serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.

SERM. III.

IN this Chapter we have a ſhort Account of the Diſobedience and Fall of our firſt Parents, the fatal Effects of which we now too ſenſibly feel, not to lament, though it would be undutiful in us, who are their wretched Sons, to accuſe them for it.

THE Perſon who was the Occaſion of their Fall, and on whom *Eve*, in the Words of the Text, lays the Blame, in Excuſe of her own Credulity and Diſobedience to an expreſs Command of God, is related to be a *Serpent*; *The Serpent beguiled me, and I did eat*; and, in the firſt Verſe of this Chapter,

Chapter, it is ſaid, that *the Serpent was more ſubtil than any Beaſt of the Field which the Lord God had made.* But as the Converſation between the Serpent and the Woman ſeems to intimate ſomething above the Capacity of a mere *Beaſt*, and leads us to ſuppoſe, that ſomething more is to be underſtood than expreſſed, my firſt Endeavour ſhall be to ſhew you, who this *Serpent* was. SERM. III.

THOUGH *Moſes* gives us only a plain Narration, without the leaſt Hint who this Serpent was; yet, from other Places of Holy Scripture, we are informed, that he was one of thoſe fallen Angels who had rebelled againſt the Almighty; for which heinous Attempt, both he and his Aſſociates were caſt out of the Regions of Bliſs into utter Miſery and Ruin.

WHEN this happened, we are not told; but whenever it was, it is very natural to ſuppoſe, that the Motives that induced him to deſtroy Mankind, were his Malice againſt God, and his Envy towards Man: For, having no Hopes of a Reconciliation with the Almighty, whom he had ſo greatly offended, this prompted him on to revenge himſelf of him, by defeating his Intent in the Creation of Mankind; and his Envy

SERM. III.

againſt them, whom he found were to ſupply his and his apoſtate Angels Places, puſhed him on to draw them, by Diſobedience, into the ſame miſerable Condition with himſelf.

WHY he made uſe of the *Serpent*, to compleat this wicked Deſign, there are many Conjectures; poſſibly, it might be, becauſe the Serpent was remarkable for his inſidious Cunning; upon which Account, it was the moſt proper Creature to make uſe of to accompliſh his malicious Purpoſe.

OTHERS have been of Opinion, that the *Serpent*, before the *Fall*, was of a tame and gentle Nature, very intimate with, and beloved by our firſt Parents; and, upon this Account, the Devil looked upon him as the moſt proper Inſtrument of Deceit.

OR if, as ſome learned Men have imagined, it were one of the ſhining winged Serpents, which in the Scriptures are called *Seraphs*, or *Seraphims*, and ſuch as the Angels of God were uſed to appear in the Form of, when they converſed with our firſt Parents in Paradiſe, and delivered the Meſſages of God to them; it was the moſt likely Appearance he could put on to deceive *Eve*; becauſe, being acquainted with ſuch Appearances,

pearances, ſhe would not willingly or eaſily ſuppoſe, that any Evil could be meant her by any under that Form. SERM. III.

AND, that the Devil did appear to *Eve*, as an Angel of Light, we have the Teſtimony of St. *Paul* to confirm[a]; who, making a Compariſon between Satan and his Miniſters, repreſents them as acting the ſame Part with the *Corinthians*, as *Satan* did with *Eve:* For, ſays he, as *Satan transformed himſelf into an Angel of Light, ſo his Miniſters are transformed into Miniſters of Righteouſneſs.*

BUT how difficult ſoever it may be to explain every particular Circumſtance or Expreſſion in the Hiſtory, yet, it is certain, that by the *Serpent* is meant, that *Tempter*, who, in other Places of Scripture, is called the *Deceiver*, the *Devil*; who, *as a roaring Lion, walketh about ſeeking whom he may devour.*

THOSE Men therefore are very much to blame, who would exclude the Exiſtence of this Prince of Darkneſs from the Liſt of Beings, and yet pretend to believe the Inſpiration and Truth of the Holy Scriptures. Without Doubt, many Things have been be-

[a] 2 *Cor.* xi. 14, 15.

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believed of him that have no real Foundation, either in Reaſon or Scripture; but to deny, that there is any ſuch Being at all, is, to contradict the plaineſt Texts of the ſacred Writings, and to overthrow the whole Scheme of thoſe Books, which were not only wrote to inform us of the true God, and Creator of all Things, but to give us an Account of the Origin of Sin; how it came into the World; and by what Method, and by whom, we were to be delivered from the Guilt and Puniſhment of it.

BUT if no more is to be underſtood by the *Serpent* mentioned in the Text, than the Creature itſelf; if the *bruiſing his Head* is to be taken only as a literal Puniſhment of that Creature, without a View to ſomething more intended by it, it can never be reconciled to the Solemnity of God's appearing to our firſt Parents upon the Occaſion, and to the miſerable Circumſtances they were then under. For, what Comfort would it have been to them, (under the Greatneſs of their Affliction, after God had pronounced the Sentence of Mortality upon them) to have been told, that the Creature which was the Occaſion of all their Unhappineſs,

happineſs, ſhould be in their Power to be deſtroyed, whenever he ſhould bite them? SERM. III.

WAS this a Conſolation ſufficient to calm their ſorrows, and make up the Loſs of Paradiſe and Immortality to them? Without Doubt, it is not.

BUT if we conſider that Being, that ſeduced our firſt Parents, to be one of thoſe Angels that *kept not their firſt Eſtate*, and who, by actuating the *Serpent*, deceived the Repreſentatives of Mankind, and by them brought Sin and Death into the World, it was agreeable to the Goodneſs of God, *who, in his Wrath, thinketh upon Mercy*, to ſhew, that though he puniſhed their Tranſgreſſion, he would not leave them without Hope, nor ſuffer the Tempter to go without his Deſerts: And in this Senſe we ought to underſtand the Scripture, when it tells us, that God, after he had pronounced Sentence upon *Adam* and his Wife, paſſed Judgment alſo upon the Deceiver, and comforts our dejected Parents with an Aſſurance, that whatever Miſchief ſhould ariſe to their Poſterity, by their Diſobedience, yet, that, in due Time, one of their Seed ſhould deſtroy all the Power of their Enemy. This was a Promiſe worthy of that gracious and kind

Being,

SERM. III. Being, whoſe loving Mercies fail not; and, without Controverſy, this was the Senſe in which *Adam* conceived it.

IF it ſhould be aſked, Why God paſſed Judgment alſo upon the *Serpent*, as an *Animal*; it may be anſwered, That God might deſign this Puniſhment as a Monument of Man's Apoſtaſy, a Teſtimony of his Diſpleaſure againſt Sin, and an inſtructive Emblem to deter all future Ages from the Commiſſion of that, which brought ſuch Vengeance along with it.

HAVING conſidered the Perſon underſtood by the *Serpent* in the Text, the next Thing that naturally offers itſelf to our Thoughts, is his *Power*.

As Mankind generally run into Extremes in moſt Things, ſo they have been in an extraordinary Manner guilty of it in relation to their ſeveral Opinions concerning the *Devil*. For, while ſome have gone ſo far as, contrary to the expreſs Teſtimony of Scripture, to deny his Being; others have erred as much the other Way, by magnifying his Power to ſuch a Height, as to make him but little, if any thing, inferior to the Almighty himſelf.

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INDEED, were we to judge of his Power only from the Succeſs he met with in tempting our firſt Parents, we might conceive a terrible Notion of it. For never was there an Enterprize of ſuch Importance, whereon the whole Fate of Mankind, and their eternal Happineſs depended, ſo eaſily concluded: They gave up their Innocence at the very firſt Summons, and ſurrendered themſelves without ſuch a Reſiſtance, as even ſinful Man now makes under the Temptations with which he is aſſaulted. SERM. III.

BUT, if we conſider other Paſſages of Scripture, we ſhall find the Devil's Power not ſo large as is believed by ſome. And, if we reflect further on our firſt Parents Temptation, we ſhall find more Reaſon to lay the Succeſs of it upon their artleſs Innocence, who were unacquainted with the Wiles of the Deceiver, and altogether ignorant of his Devices, than upon the Effects of his Wiſdom and Cunning.

FOR though we are taught by the Scriptures, that the Devil is always ready to tempt Men to commit Sin; yet we muſt take this always along with us, that he has no Power over our Perſons, or our Wills; he can do no more than ſet his Baits and Allurements before

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fore us; but we need fear nothing from them, if we do not baſely betray ourſelves, and treacherouſly comply with his Temptations. When therefore the Scripture aſcribes every wicked Thing that is done by us to the Devil, it is to be underſtood in no other Senſe but this; that as God may be ſaid to be the Author of all the Good Men do, becauſe he has willed and commanded, that they ſhould do Good; ſo the Devil may be ſaid to be the Author of all our Sins, becauſe he was the firſt Being that diſobeyed his Maker, and takes a Delight in thoſe that imitate him in Evil.

INDEED, the Scriptures, in ſome Places, repreſent him as the *God of this World*, as *the Prince of the Power of the Air*, and as having every Thing at his Diſpoſal; but if we take theſe Expreſſions in their true Meaning, we ſhall ſee, that they do not contain the Senſe that is generally put upon them. For when he is called *the God of this World*; he is not thus called, either upon Account that he made the World, or has any Power to do as he pleaſeth in it; but he is ſo called, becauſe the greateſt Part of the World were, at the Time the Apoſtle made uſe of that Expreſſion, ſunk in Idolatry

latry and Wickedneſs; and for that Reaſon were become his Lot and Portion. SERM. III.

THUS alſo, when St. *Paul* tells the *Epheſians*, who were converted to Chriſtianity, *You hath He* (i. e. *Chriſt*) *quickened who were dead in Treſpaſſes and Sins; wherein, in Time paſt, ye walked according to the Courſe of this World, according to the Prince of the Power of the Air, the Spirit that now worketh in the Children of Diſobedience*[a]; by the Expreſſion, *According to the Prince of the Power of the Air, the Spirit that worketh now in the Children of Diſobedience*, is to be underſtood, the Suggeſtions only of that wicked Spirit; for he has no actual Power over Mens Minds any other Way; he cannot force us to be wicked, we may reſiſt his Temptations if we pleaſe; and the Fault is our own, when we become guilty of thoſe Sins which we ſuffered him to tempt us to commit.

AND as his *Power* is limited, ſo is his *Knowledge*.

FOR though he is, without Diſpute, a very cunning Spirit, and can make very ſhrewd Gueſſes at our Inclinations, from an Obſervation of our Tempers and Paſſions; yet,

[a] *Epheſ.* ii. 1, 2.

SERM. III. yet, to God alone belongs the Knowledge of our Hearts: He only it is *who knoweth the Hearts of all the Children of Men.* And, that the Devil is ignorant of many Things, Reaſon itſelf will inform us; for, as he is a created and finite Being, it is impoſſible for him to be in all Places at the ſame Time; and, therefore, let him be ever ſo induſtrious to diſcover Things, he muſt be unacquainted with many Particulars, which are only known to God, who is the ſole Diſcerner of the Thoughts and Intentions of the Heart.

AND, that ſome Things are hid from his Knowledge, we have a remarkable Inſtance of, in his Attempt upon our Bleſſed Saviour; and in his tempting *Judas* to betray him: For, had he known who our Bleſſed Saviour was, we cannot ſuppoſe he would ever have ſet upon him, becauſe he muſt have known it would have been impoſſible for him to have ſucceeded: Nor would he ever have *entered into the Heart of Judas*, and puſhed him on to *betray his Maſter*, had he ever thought, that the Salvation of Mankind was to be accompliſhed by the Sacrifice of the Death of Chriſt. His Deſign, by the Death of Chriſt, was, to put an End to his Doctrine, which was ſo oppoſite to the Intereſt

of

of his Kingdom. Could he have foreſeen the Advantage that accrued to the World, by the Death of the Bleſſed *Jeſus*, he would by all Means have endeavoured to hinder his Crucifixion, and for once have tempted the Traitor *Judas* to have been honeſt. SERM. III.

BUT, if the Devil has not that *Knowledge* and *Power* that is generally ſuppoſed, how is it, that he is repreſented as able to work *Miracles*, and to do many wonderful Works, and to have even Power to *poſſeſs* the Bodies of Men? To which I anſwer, That, without Doubt, the Devil has a Power of working *Miracles*, that is, of doing Things which are beyond *human Power* to do: The Scripture aſſures us of all this in many Places; particularly, in giving an Account of the Coming of *Antichriſt*, it deſcribes it in this Manner: *Whoſe Coming is after the Working of Satan, with all Power, and Signs, and lying Wonders*[a]: But this is all by the Permiſſion of God, and as a Puniſhment for their Obſtinacy, *becauſe they received not the Love of the Truth, that they might be ſaved: And for this Cauſe, God ſhall ſend them ſtrong Deluſions, that they ſhould believe a Lie, who believed not the Truth, but had Pleaſure in*

[a] 2 *Theſſ.* ii. 9, 10, 11, 12.

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Unrighteouſneſs. It is for the Puniſhment of Mens incorrigible Wickedneſs, that God ſuffers Satan to deceive them by lying Wonders; but, without his Leave, he can do nothing, any more than the weakeſt Creature in the Univerſe.

As to his *Power of poſſeſſing* the Bodies of particular Men; this alſo is certain from Scripture. Indeed, there are, and have been, ſome Men of Opinion, that theſe *Poſſeſſions* were only *Diſeaſes* with which Men were afflicted; and, according to the Cuſtom of thoſe Times, were called *Poſſeſſions*, becauſe the *Jews* imputed every Diſtemper to the Devil, or his Angels. But, with Leave, there muſt certainly be ſomething more to be underſtood than bare Diſeaſes; for the Scriptures make an evident Diſtinction between curing Diſeaſes, and diſpoſſeſſing Men of evil Spirits. Thus it is ſaid, That *Chriſt gave to his Diſciples Power againſt unclean Spirits to caſt them out, and to heal all Manner of Sickneſs, and all Manner of Diſeaſes*[a]: And, accordingly, we are told, that *they healed many that were ſick, and caſt out many Devils*[b]. And as a ſtronger Proof, that they were ſomething more than Diſeaſes, we find,

[a] *Matt.* x. 1. [b] *Mark* vi. 13.

find, that they even expoſtulated with our Saviour at the Time of their Ejection; ſaying, *What have we to do with thee? Art thou come to deſtroy us? Art thou come to torment us before the Time*[a]? From all which we cannot but conclude, that they were really *Poſſeſſions.* SERM. III.

AND, probably, as it was one End of Chriſt's Incarnation, *to deſtroy the Works of the Devil*; ſo God might ſuffer, about the Time of our Saviour's coming into the World, the Devil to exert himſelf in an unuſual Manner, in order to be more ſignally triumphed over by the *Son of God.*

HAVING conſidered the Power of the great Enemy of Mankind, I come, in the laſt Place, to ſhew, how far we are *excuſable*, or *inexcuſable*, in complying with his *Temptations.*

WITHOUT Doubt, the *Mercy* of God will incline him to judge our Failings as favourably as he can. He will hear every Plea that the Sinner ſhall offer in his Defence, and will accept of every juſt Reaſon that ſhall be given in his Excuſe: But howſoever great his *Mercy* may be, yet we muſt remember, that it is not ſo great as to interfere

[a] *Matt.* viii. 29.

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fere with his *Juſtice:* The *Holineſs* and *Purity* of his *Nature* is ſuch, that he has the greateſt Hatred of Sin; and as his infinite *Knowledge* will not permit him to be deceived, ſo we muſt not hope to overreach him by any *falſe Excuſe.*

WE ſee, when our firſt Parents had tranſgreſſed the Command of God, that they were very ready, with an Excuſe, to take off the Blame from themſelves; but, notwithſtanding this, they were both juſtly puniſhed, becauſe they tranſgreſſed God's expreſs Command in eating the forbidden Fruit.

IF ever God would have forgiven a Breach of his Commands, we may ſuppoſe, he would have done it at that Time, and for that Offence; becauſe the whole Race of Mankind were to be involved in the Puniſhment; and our firſt Parents Inexperience of the Wiles and Subtilty of the Devil might have been pleaded in their Excuſe; but as he would not accept this from them, much leſs will he accept it from us, who are *not ignorant of his Devices.* Beſides, it is our Duty to reſiſt his Temptations; for we know that *Satan* has no Power over us but what we give him; it muſt be by our own Conſent that we are undone; and the Fault

Fault will lie at our Door, if we chuſe to do the *Evil*; becauſe we might and ought to have refuſed it. SERM. III.

AND ſo far is our being tempted by *Satan* from being an Excuſe for our Sins, that it is really an Aggravation of them, that we have complied with ſo great an Enemy of God; and, contrary to our Vows and Obligations, have deſerted the Cauſe we were engaged in.

BESIDES, it is a Deſpite done to the Grace of God, which is never wanting to a ſincere Aſker of it, and by which God puts it in our Power to reſiſt Temptations, that we have ſo far neglected its Aſſiſtance, when we might have overcome our Enemy with that divine Support: Such Neglect is an Aggravation of our Fault; for ſhall God offer his Grace, and ſhall we make ſo light of his Favour, as to diſregard the Uſe we ought to make of it? Will not ſuch a Behaviour draw down a ſevere Judgment upon us, and provoke God to leave us to be a Prey to the Devil, and our own vicious Inclinations? Without Doubt, it will.— Let us therefore pray to God, that we may, by the Aſſiſtance of his Grace, reſiſt the Temptations that aſſault us in our Paſſage through this World; and, inſtead of endea-

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vouring to accuſe the Devil, as the Author of our Follies, who very often hath no Hand in them, let us mortify our corrupt Inclinations; and, by that Means, we ſhall find ourſelves more able to encounter them. Such Trials are deſigned by Divine Providence to ennoble our Faith; and the greater the Temptation, the more valuable it is.

LET me therefore, with St. *Peter*[a], *exhort you to rejoice in manifold Temptations; that the Trial of your Faith being much more precious than that of Gold that periſheth, though it be tried with Fire, may be found unto Praiſe, and Honour, and Glory, at the Appearing of Jeſus Chriſt: Whom having not ſeen ye love; in whom, though now ye ſee him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with Joy unſpeakable, and full of Glory.*

[a] 1 *Pet.* i. 6, 7.

SER-

SERMON IV.

The DUTY and USEFULNESS of PUBLICK WORSHIP.

Preached at *St. James's*, *Clerkenwell*, at the Opening of the Church, after it had been Repaired and Beautified.

1 KINGS viii. 30.

Hearken thou to the Supplication of thy Servant, and of thy People Iſrael, when they ſhall pray towards this Place: And hear thou in Heaven thy Dwelling-Place; and when thou heareſt, forgive.

THESE Words are Part of *Solomon's* Prayer, at the Dedication of the Temple, both for himſelf and the People of *Iſrael*; and are proper to give us a juſt Idea of the Majeſty of God, and the true Uſe we ought to make of thoſe Places, which are or ſhall be ſet apart for his Service. SERM. IV.

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SOLOMON, at the 27th Verſe, ſeems raviſhed with Admiration of God's Goodneſs; who, being incomprehenſible, and Lord over all, will condeſcend to have Converſe with Men. *But will God indeed dwell on the Earth?* Will that great and infinite Being vouchſafe to come down among Men? *Behold, the Heaven, and Heaven of Heavens, cannot contain thee; how much leſs this Houſe that I have builded?* Yet, however unſuitable it may be to thee, *have Reſpect*, we beſeech thee, *to the Place of which thou haſt ſaid, My Name ſhall be there; and hearken thou to the Supplication of thy Servant, and of thy People Iſrael, when they ſhall pray towards*, or in, *this Place; and hear thou in Heaven thy Dwelling-Place; and when thou heareſt, forgive.*

I BELIEVE, you prevent me in my Application of theſe Words to our preſent meeting together. I ſhall therefore, in diſcourſing upon them, ſhew the Duty and Uſefulneſs of having publick appointed Places for the Service and Worſhip of Almighty God; and, by Way of Inference, intreat you to make that Advantage of them, for which they were primarily deſigned.

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THE Duty of having publick Places for the Service and Worſhip of God, may be deduced, SERM. IV.

FIRST, From his being the common Parent of us all; and from whom all that we have proceeds: And therefore we ought, in Gratitude, to adore and praiſe his Name, and that in the moſt publick Manner, for all his Mercies and Favours vouchſafed unto us.—It was from this Principle that *David* was uneaſy, when he conſidered the Goodneſs of God to him, how he had raiſed him from the Sheep-cote [a], and made him Ruler over his People *Iſrael*; and the Meanneſs of the Place wherein the Ark of the Lord abided: *Behold*, ſays he to the Prophet *Nathan*, *I dwell in an Houſe of Cedar, but the Ark of God dwelleth within Curtains* [b]. And he was determined within himſelf to build a Temple to his Name, if God had not forbid it; and told him, that he reſerved the Honour of that Work for his Son, who was to ſucceed him.

SECONDLY, The appropriating theſe publick Places for the Service of God is our Duty, as the open Exerciſe of Religion is more for the Glory of God; and as external

[a] 2 *Sam.* vii. 8. [b] *Ver.* 2.

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nal Communion in publick Acts of Worſhip declares to the World whom and what we ſerve: And the Senſe which all Nations, and all Religions, heretofore have, and ſtill do retain, of the Obligations they are under of having publick Places, evinces how agreeable they are to common Reaſon. And when the Chriſtian Religion firſt appeared in the World, though the Apoſtles, and Profeſſors of it, were not allowed ſuch publick Places to ſerve God, as we are; yet, as publickly as they could, *they continued daily in the Temple, and in breaking of Bread from Houſe to Houſe, praiſing God, and having Favour with all the People*[a].

THE ſame Arguments that prove it our Duty to appropriate a Place for the Service and Worſhip of Almighty God, prove it alſo to be our Duty to have it decent, and adorned in a Manner becoming the Uſe for which it is deſigned.—Indeed, the Grandeur and Expence of the *Jewiſh* Temple is not agreeable to the Genius of the Chriſtian Religion, which conſiſts more in the *inward Diſpoſition of the Soul*, than in *outward Ornaments*; yet, nevertheleſs, a *decent Adorning* of our Churches adds a Solemnity and

[a] *Acts* ii. 46, 47.

and Reverence to the Place, and affects the Mind in an extraordinary Manner.—As, on the other Hand, a ſlovenly, ruinated Place makes us almoſt forget it is for divine Worſhip; or judge, that Men cannot be in earneſt in the Service of God, who will be at no Expence even to cleanſe his Sanctuary. SERM. IV.

WE do not grudge to make our Houſes as compleat as poſſible for the Reception of our Friends; and ought we not to ſhew the ſame Reſpect to the Houſe of God, where he is in a particular Manner preſent; and not only as our Governor, but as our greateſt Friend, merits more Regard from us than the united Friendſhip of the whole World.

BUT, in the ſecond Place, as it is our Duty to appropriate a Place for the publick Worſhip of God in Point of Gratitude, for his providential Care over us, and for thoſe daily Bleſſings we receive from him; and alſo, as it redounds more to his Glory than private Devotion (which is only between God and ourſelves) can do; ſo the *Uſefulneſs* of it is, on many Accounts, very great. For,

1ſt, WAS Religion to conſiſt only in private Devotion, and confined to our Cloſets, the Belief of God would, in a very ſmall Space of Time, be loſt; and Men would do

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do what was right in their own Eyes. For the Bulk of Mankind judge of Religion only from what they ſee; and are drawn to the Practice of it, only becauſe they would imitate and be like others. Whereas, were there no ſuch appointed Places and Seaſons for publick Worſhip, they would be ſo intent upon the World, and the Advantages of it, that they would hardly allot any Time themſelves. It is owing to theſe Places, and the conſtant Returns of publick Worſhip, that the Zeal and Spirit of Religion remain among us; without which, Chriſt's Religion would be in the ſame Condition with himſelf, when on Earth; not find a Place where to lay its Head.

2*dly*, THE Uſefulneſs of publick Places for divine Worſhip appears alſo from this, that God himſelf has promiſed, that [a] *where two or three are gathered together in his Name*, and for his Honour, *he would be there in the Midſt of them*; that they might depend upon his Aſſiſtance, and the Effuſions of his Holy Spirit, to direct them in their Wants, and aſſiſt them in the Conqueſt of their ſpiritual Enemies. And our Bleſſed Saviour hath promiſed, that *whatſoever they ſhould*

[a] *Matt.* xviii. 20.

ſhould aſk the Father in his Name, he would give it them [a]. SERM. IV.

THESE are the peculiar Bleſſings that attend the faithful Worſhippers of Almighty God, the devout Partakers of his Ordinances; for his Delight is in them that fear him, and put their Truſt in his Mercy.

I COME now, by Way of Inference, to intreat you to make that Advantage of them to yourſelves, for which they were primarily deſigned.

THE Scripture tells us, that it came to paſs, after *Solomon* had finiſhed the Temple, that the Lord appeared unto him, and ſaid unto him, *I have heard thy Prayer and thy Supplication that thou haſt made before me; I have hallowed this Houſe which thou haſt built, to put my Name there for ever, and mine Eyes and mine Heart ſhall be there perpetually* [b].

AND as God is ſo kind as to be in a particular Manner preſent in his Temple for our Good, let us be conſtant Attenders at his Altar. For when Men once come to find Excuſes to abſent themſelves from the publick Worſhip of God, they will multiply very faſt upon them; ſo that, by Degrees,

[a] *John* xvi. 23. [b] 1 *Kings* ix. 3.

SERM. IV. grees, their *Coolneſs* for *Devotion* will grow into *Indifference*, till they become quite *careleſs* about it. But the Misfortune does not reſt here:—The Soul of Man is of ſo active a Nature, and the Temptations to Wickedneſs ſo powerful, that if it is not employed in what is right, it certainly will be acting what is wrong: Which is too evident, God knows, in many, who abſented themſelves at firſt from the Service of God, only to indulge themſelves in ſome *Diverſions*, which, at other Times, would have been lawful; yet, have afterwards committed ſuch Crimes, the bare mentioning of which would have ſhocked them before. *Let us therefore hold faſt the Profeſſion of our Faith without wavering; not forſaking the aſſembling of ourſelves together, as the Manner of ſome is*[a]. For upon this depends the due Performance of the reſt of our Duty; it being impoſſible not to have our Devotion irkſome to us, when we come to it with ſo much Reluctance.

THE next Preparative to a conſtant Attendance on the publick Worſhip is, to bring our Minds to a Frame and Temper proper for the Buſineſs we are about. Nothing looks ſo

[a] *Heb.* x. 23, 24, 25.

ſo ill, or is a ſurer Sign of a light and wanton Heart, than to ſee a Perſon regardleſs of his Behaviour at ſuch a Time: For if a ſerious Demeanour may ever be demanded of us, ſurely, it may be expected at ſuch Seaſons. It is eſteemed a very groſs, ungenteel Thing to behave indecently in the Houſe of a Friend; how much more then in the Houſe of God? Polite Behaviour is, to give to all their Due, and ſhew a juſt Reſpect unto them. And if it can be thought, that God doth not expect the ſame Uſage, it may then be right to deprive him of it; but till then, it will certainly be our wiſer as well as beſt Way, to behave ourſelves with Reverence and Seriouſneſs. SERM. IV.

BESIDES, a Want of this Diſpoſition, will make every Act of religious Duty of no Effect or Advantage to us.

CONFESSION of Sins is an indiſpenſable Duty, and ſeems to be the moſt proper Beginning in order to render each following Part of Divine Worſhip beneficial to us.— But how ſhould Confeſſion of Sins, which is an Acknowledgment of having done Evil, and is always attended with unfeigned Sorrow, be conſiſtent with Levity of Behaviour? Are we not conſcious of our Guilt?

And

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And ought we to kneel down with Careleſneſs and Indifference, when we are to aſk Pardon for our Faults; when we have abuſed ſo kind, ſo loving a Father; one who hath given us our very *Being*; whoſe watchful Providence is continually over us; whoſe Bounty has miniſtred to our Wants; whoſe Love and Goodneſs has not only given us all the Bleſſings we enjoy, but, when we were by Nature Children of Wrath, contrived a Way to reconcile us to himſelf, and reſtore us to Happineſs, by ſending his only begotten Son to die for our Iniquities?—Ought then ſuch a Benefactor to be ſlighted; or, rather, ought not we to fall down before him with moſt humble and contrite Hearts, and acknowledge our Vileneſs and Baſeneſs to him?

BUT further: If we have not Ingenuity enough to be concerned for our Faults, from a Principle of Love and Gratitude, from a Senſe of his Perfections, and the greateſt Favours received from him; the Miſchief, ſure, and Puniſhment, that Sin is like to bring upon us, would be ſufficient to make a Man out of Humour with himſelf, when he conſiders, that he is the Author of his own

own Ruin; and, unleſs he repents, muſt be everlaſtingly miſerable. SERM. IV.

SUCH Conſiderations would repreſs all light and idle Thoughts, and produce in our Hearts that godly Sorrow for Sins which is not to be repented of.

THE next Duty to a ſincere Confeſſion of our Sins is, firſt, Prayer to Almighty God, that he would aſſiſt us in our Wants; and, next, Thankſgiving for Mercies received.

SOLOMON, in Confidence of the Regard which God had for the Place of his publick Service, begs of him, that he would hearken to the Supplications that Men ſhould make there; and *God promiſed him, that his Eyes and his Heart ſhould be there perpetually.* Yet, nevertheleſs, though God hath promiſed this, we muſt not imagine, that he will regard thoſe Prayers which do not flow from a ſerious and honeſt Mind. If they are void of Sincerity, they will never be accepted by him; for he is not ſo fond of any Place but he can give it up: And he tells *Solomon*, that, if he and the Children of *Iſrael* did not keep his Statutes, and his Commandments, he would deſtroy both them and the Temple too.

SERM. IV. To make therefore our publick Prayers beneficial to us, we must endeavour that they are hearty and sincere. It is not sufficient for our Purpose, that we are daily in the Temple, and regularly offer up our Prayers out of Form and Custom: If we do nothing more, it will do us less Good than if we had never prayed at all; nay, in reality, it is no praying, unless our Heart and our Tongue join together, and our Desires are hearty to obtain what we outwardly ask for.

LET us therefore, whenever we appear in his Sanctuary, and fall low on our Knees before his Footstool, consider who it is we are before, a God who is infinitely wise, who knows and sees what we do, and is intimately acquainted with our most secret Thoughts; and then we shall not dare to think of imposing upon him; but behave with that Reverence in our Addresses, and Sincerity in our Prayers, as becometh such indigent and helpless Petitioners.

IT is a great Mercy, that God doth vouchsafe to hear and answer our Prayers at all, considering, that it is no Profit to him to relieve us; therefore, it must be uncommon Impudence to pretend to pray to him

when we have no Meaning, and affront him in ſo open and notorious a Manner. We ourſelves ſhould be exceedingly enraged, if another ſhould aſk a Favour, which was in our Power to give, in a Manner that looked as if he had no Regard whether he received it or not; and we may be ſure, that, as God is a jealous God, he will not ſuffer his Honour to be abuſed. SERM. IV.

LET us therefore, as we are ſo fully aſſured of God's Readineſs to beſtow all good Things upon his Creatures, offer up our conſtant and importunate Prayers to him, that he would aſſiſt us in our Neceſſities, bleſs us in our honeſt Endeavours, and give us his Holy Spirit to direct and guide us in all our Doings. Such a Senſe of our Dependence upon him, would make our Prayers more ſincere and fervent; and the Want of this Fervency in our Devotions, diſcovers a Sort of Atheiſm and Infidelity in our Hearts; it looks as if we thought, that God did not ſee, or, that he did not concern himſelf about us; elſe, we can never give any good Reaſon, or Excuſe, for our Coolneſs and Indifference in our Prayers.

THE ſame Arguments, which I have already uſed, to make the Confeſſion of our

SERM. IV. Sins, and our Prayers for future Bleſſings, available for our Advantage, hold good in reſpect of our Thankſgiving for Mercies received; more particularly, for that which we commemorate in the bleſſed Sacrament. For as it is a great Affront, and even mocking of God, for a Man to draw near to him, in any of his Ordinances, without a ſincere and well-meaning Heart; ſo he ſeems to reſent ſuch a Practice in no Inſtance more than in this of the Holy Communion: Of which, he who eateth and drinketh unworthily, is expreſly ſaid by the Apoſtle [a], *to be guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord; and to eat and drink Damnation to himſelf:* Which Expreſſions, though they are differently interpreted by divers Perſons; yet, in whatever Senſe we take them, they do abundantly ſhew, that God is in a particular Manner offended with thoſe who any-way profane this ſacred Inſtitution.

IT is therefore the *Duty*, and ought very much to be the *Concern* of every Chriſtian, firſt, to examine himſelf, and to make the beſt Trial and Enquiry that he can, whether he be truly ſincere in his Reſolutions of ſerving and obeying God faithfully all his Life

[a] 1 *Cor.* xi. 27, 29.

Life long, (for any Perſon who is thus diſ- SERM.
poſed, and none other, is ever acceptable to IV.
God;) and then, with Devotion and Reverence ſuitable unto ſuch Sincerity, to come and eat of this Bread and drink of this Cup; that, as on the one Side, he may not neglect what Chriſt hath commanded and required; ſo on the other, he may not incur the Penalty which is threatened to an unworthy Receiver.

LET us therefore not content ourſelves with a formal outſide Devotion, with an external Obedience to the Ordinances of God: For though we may deceive Men, and paſs in the World for what we are not, God is not to be deceived; and Hypocriſy is not only abominated by him, but will be moſt ſeverely puniſhed.

IN every Exerciſe of Religion let our Actions and our Hearts join together; then, in the Language of the *Pſalmiſt*[a], *Our Prayers will be in God's Sight as Incenſe; and the lifting up of our Hands, as the Evening Sacrifice.*—Then will our Supplications and our Prayers be heard from Heaven, his Dwelling-Place; and when he heareth, he will forgive.

[a] *Pſalm* cxli. 2.

SERM. IV. GRANT therefore, Almighty and Merciful God, that thy faithful People may do unto thee true and laudable Services; and so faithfully serve thee in this Life, that they may not finally fail to attain thy heavenly Promises, through the Merits of Jesus Christ our Lord.

SER-

SERMON V.

On FASTING and TEMPTATIONS.

LUKE iv. 12. latter Part.

Thou ſhalt not tempt the Lord thy God.

TO diſcourſe upon theſe Words with the greater Advantage, it will be neceſſary to conſider the various Temptations of *Satan*, by which he endeavoured to overcome our Bleſſed Saviour, in that Order they are related by the Evangeliſt. In the firſt and ſecond Verſes it is ſaid, *Jeſus was led by the Spirit into the Wilderneſs, being forty Days tempted of the Devil; and in thoſe Days he did eat nothing: And when they were ended, he afterward hungred.* SERM. V.

WHY the Holy Spirit of God (which is here to be underſtood by the *Spirit*) led our Bleſſed Saviour into the Wilderneſs immediately after his Baptiſm, was, doubtleſs, for

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many great and good Ends; among which theſe following may be ſome, *viz.* To teach us, that when, by Baptiſm, we have conſecrated ourſelves to God's Service, we muſt expect to meet with Temptations; and to inform us, by our Lord's Example, how we may beſt reſiſt them, even by an unſhaken Faith, and *by the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God*[a].

WHY our Saviour was led into the Wilderneſs more than any other Place, we know not; probably, it might be, to overthrow the Devil in the ſame Manner as he overthrew *Eve* alone; or to teach us, that no Place is free from Temptations; nay, that we are more eſpecially to expect them when we are alone; and, that *Satan* will certainly aſſault us, when we are in Straits and Difficulties, from which we ſee no ordinary Means of Deliverance.

WHY alſo our Saviour continued ſo long in this ſolitary Retirement, might be, that he might prepare himſelf, by Meditation and Prayer, for the Execution of what he was ſent into the World to fulfil. And, it is alſo underſtood as an Accompliſhment of thoſe ancient Types of *Moſes* and *Elijah*'s faſt-

[a] *Epheſ.* vi, 17.

fasting forty Days and forty Nights. *I fell down*, says *Moses*, *before the Lord forty Days and forty Nights; I did neither eat Bread nor drink Water, because of all your Sins which ye sinned, in doing wickedly in the Sight of the Lord, to provoke him to Anger* [a]. And *Elijah*'s Fast was for the Idolatry of the Children of *Israel*. Thus we read, *There came a Voice unto him, saying, What doest thou here, Elijah? And he said, I have been very jealous for the Lord God of Hosts; because the Children of Israel have forsaken thy Covenant, thrown down thine Altars, and slain thy Prophets with the Sword* [b].

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After our Blessed Saviour had fasted forty Days, the Scripture tells us, *he was an hungred*; upon which the Devil, who had before invisibly attended him, appeared before him in a visible Manner, and tempted him to satisfy his Hunger, by miraculously turning Stones into Bread. To whom our Saviour replied, That, howsoever necessary Bread might be to support Life, *Man liveth not by Bread alone, but by every Word that proceedeth from the Mouth of God*; and therefore we ought by no Means to distrust his Power: For as he fed the *Israelites* in the

[a] *Deut.* ix. 18. [b] 1 *Kings* xix. 13, 14.

Serm. V. the barren Wilderneſs with Manna from Heaven, when they were in the greateſt Diſtreſs; ſo, whoſoever dependeth faithfully upon him, ſhall never be diſappointed, but find Relief at the laſt; though impoſſible to be brought about by any human Means, or in a natural Way.

From this Part of the Temptation, I ſhall make theſe following Reflections.

I. Upon Faſting in Imitation of our Saviour.

II. How far Faſting is neceſſary.

III. That we ought to do nothing inconſiſtent with our Duty, to relieve ourſelves from Want and Neceſſities.

I. Upon Faſting in Imitation of our Saviour.

There have been ſome *enthuſiaſtical Men*, that have wildly attempted to imitate our Bleſſed Lord, in pretending to keep a Faſt of forty Days; but the Failure in their Deſign ſhewed the Impoſſibility of the Thing, and cauſed them to be looked upon as ſuperſtitious or mad Men. The Faſting

of

of our Lord was *miraculous*, and therefore no Example for us to follow, the Frailty of whose Natures are not able to bear so long an Abstinence; and we must not expect, that God will support us in such Attempts, where neither *Reason* nor *Duty*, but *Superstition*, or, perhaps, *Vanity*, was the Motive. SERM. V.

The Institution therefore of a Fast of forty Days, in Imitation of our Blessed Saviour, or an entire Abstinence from particular Meats (such as the *Church of Rome* enjoins) all that Season, are Things that must expose Religion, by having it placed in the Observation of those Things that are of no Value, and is such *bodily Exercise as profiteth nothing*.

II. How far Fasting is necessary, and why it was commanded by our Blessed Saviour, may appear from hence:

Fasting is naturally a Remedy for those Diseases, which Intemperance and Luxury bring upon us; this restores the Body to its Strength, cools the Fever of the Blood, and sets the animal Spirits in a regular Motion. In short, Abstinence, which is the only Fasting possible, abates the Violence of our Passions, destroys our wicked Desires, and keeps

Serm. V. keeps the whole Man at Peace with himself; so that common Prudence would incline us to follow this Method, though we were to give no Account to God for any disorderly Action, that a Life of Excess might draw us into: So great are the natural Blessings that attend Abstinence or Fasting.

But our Blessed Master not only intended the Health of our Bodies, but the Good of our Souls, in this Command; for Fasting is very proper to fit us for Prayer and Meditation; because, when the Body is disordered by *Excess*, the Mind must share in feeling the bad Effects of Intemperance, and the Spirits must become dull and inactive; it will be impossible for the Mind to think upon God, to pray to, and praise him, as we ought, while the Fumes of Liquor, or the Crudities of Indigestion, hinder its Operations. For though it be independent, in its Nature, on the Body, and can subsist when the other shall be no more; yet, while they live together, they must act in Concert, or what can be done to any good Purpose?

If Fasting be in any other Sense necessary for *Prayer* and *Meditation*, it, probably, may be this, *viz.* by frequent Abstinence the

the Body may be humbled, and our Spirits reduced; and then our Thoughts will naturally turn upon the Subject of Mortality, and the Frailty of the human Body, that thus ſenſibly perceives, and is affected with, a temporary Want of Food; which will immediately ſtir us up to meditate upon God, *from whom cometh our Help*; *and* upon *the Lord, who is the Rock of our Salvation.* SERM. V.

FASTING alſo is good, as it is a publick Teſtimony of our Humiliation before God; for though Religion doth more immediately conſiſt in ſpiritual Service, yet *external Acts* of Religion are very good, when no more Streſs is laid upon them than what is right: And, in this Senſe, he that doth not ſerve God in his Body, as well as his Soul, pays him but half the Service of a Man; becauſe, the viſible and decent Worſhip of God cannot be performed without ſome one or other external Act of Devotion: And the Solemnity of a *publick Humiliation*, by *Faſting* and *Prayer*, affects us with a Seriouſneſs and Gravity becoming ourſelves: And it is hardly poſſible for us to be unconcerned for our own Errors, when our Fellow-Chriſtian appears to be devout.

III. Our

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III. Our Bleſſed Saviour's Refuſal to comply with the Devil's Requeſt, to turn Stones into Bread, ſhould teach us to do nothing inconſiſtent with our Duty, to relieve ourſelves from Want and the Neceſſities that we may labour under.

Want is a great Temptation; and when we are oppreſſed with it, the Devil is very buſy to urge us to quarrel with Divine Providence: But our Saviour tells us, *Man ſhall not live by Bread alone, but by every Word that proceedeth out of the Mouth of God*[a].

We muſt, at all Times, depend upon the Protection of Providence, which is ever able to ſupport us: We muſt learn not to be too importunate for the Things of this Life, but ſubmit patiently to our Condition, and to the preſent Straits we are in, till it ſhall pleaſe God to better our Fortune, and remove our Wants; and then we ſhall not be tempted to do any wicked Thing, but ſhall overcome the Solicitations of our great Enemy, and make him retreat from us with Shame and Confuſion.

The Devil, finding that the Son of God was not to be overcome by *Hunger*, to do any unwarrantable Thing, to ſatisfy that ur-

[a] *Matt.* iv. 4.

urgent Desire, sets upon him with alluring Promises of Glory and Empire. *And the Devil taking him up into an high Mountain, shewed unto him all the Kingdoms of the World in a Moment of Time. And the Devil said unto him, All this Power will I give thee, and the Glory of them; for that is delivered unto me, and to whomsoever I will, I give it. If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine*[a]. SERM. V.

SUCH a Promise, he thought, was impossible to be withstood, which so many others would, with much Earnestness, have embraced: But our Blessed Lord, who was not to be deceived by the specious Outside of Things, thus answers him: *Get thee behind me, Satan; for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve*[b]. As if he had said, Whatsoever Glory Men may imagine in the Pomp and Grandeur of Majesty, it is much more glorious to serve and obey God in his Commands, than to give Laws to the whole World.

FROM whence we may observe,

1. THE Folly of desiring to be *great* at the Expence of our *Virtue*.

FOR

[a] *Luke* iv. 5, 6, 7. [b] *Ver.* 8.

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For what is it that such Men, with so much Earnestness, desire? It is only to be admired by the restless and inconstant Vulgar, and for that which is not worthy our Pursuit. True Glory is the Praise that ariseth from virtuous Actions, which have the Approbation and Esteem of God, and will be rewarded by him, when all the transitory Glories of this World will be no more. That Glory that ariseth by Conquest, ought rather to be accounted Infamy than Honour: For what is it else but Butchery and Murder, the Desolation and Destruction of Mankind?

2. We may from hence observe the Happiness of a virtuous Contentment.

Though seldom esteemed such; yet, how much more happy and honourable is that Man, who, by being content in the Station that God hath placed him, endeavours to promote the Good and Felicity of Man; and, having no unreasonable Passions to gratify, attempts nothing against the Peace and Quiet of others; but consults, as far as in him lies, the Ease and Happiness of the World?

Such a Disposition is secured from many Temptations, that assault and ruin the ambitious

bitious and reſtleſs Mind; for, conſider- SERM. V.
ing himſelf in the Station deſigned by Providence for him, he is eaſy with the Lot or Portion aſſigned; nor murmurs at, or charges God as unjuſt or unkind to him. How paſſionately fond ſoever others may be of Grandeur, or how much ſoever they may idolize and adore the Pomp and Splendour of this World, he acquieſces with God's Diſpoſal of him, and will not, through an unreaſonable Love of the Creatures, forget to be grateful and obedient to the Creator of all Things. *He worſhippeth the Lord God only*; and prefers, above all Things, his Service, and the Practice of true Religion; being always ready and willing, with our Bleſſed Saviour, to reject whatſoever cometh in Competition with his Duty; nay, the whole World itſelf, if offered to him at the Purchaſe of Sin.

3. The Devil being diſappointed a ſecond Time, in his Offer of Glory and Empire to our Saviour, conveys him, by a Power at that Time given him by God, to the Top of the Temple; and having placed him there, to this Purport addreſſeth himſelf to him: *If thou be the Son of God*, as I heard thee ſo acknowledged by a Voice

Serm. V. from Heaven at thy Baptism, give me some Proof of God's paternal Affection for thee, by *casting thyself down from hence:* For, *if thou be God's beloved Son, he will give his Angels Charge concerning thee, and in their Hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any Time thou dash thy Foot against a Stone*[a]. *And Jesus answering, said unto him, It is said, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.* To whom (in other Words) our Blessed Lord answered, God has given sufficient Proof of his Love for me in declaring me his only *beloved, in whom he was well pleased:* Wherefore then should I distrust him, or require presumptuously any farther Proof of his Care of me, by wilfully throwing myself into Dangers, to try whether he will protect me or not? When it is written, *Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.* Upon this Reply we read, That *the Devil departed from him for a Season.*

And from these Words I will draw some few Observations, and then conclude.

TO tempt God, in Scripture, denotes a Distrust of his Power, Truth, or Providence, after sufficient Demonstrations given for our Encouragement and Confidence therein.

[a] *Luke* iv. 9, 10, 11.

therein. Thus, when the *Jews* murmured against *Moſes* for Want of Water[a]; ſaying, *Give us Water that we may drink: Thou haſt brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our Children, and our Cattle with Thirſt*; he anſwered, *Wherefore do ye tempt the Lord?* i. e. Why do ye diſtruſt the Lord your God? Why do ye queſtion his Goodneſs, Power, or Inclination to ſerve you, who has given you ſo many miraculous Inſtances of his Care over you? Do ye think the Hand of the Lord is ſhort? Do ye ſuppoſe his Power at an End? Why do ye not remember that he every Day rains Bread upon you from Heaven? And, in a Word, why do ye diſtruſt him, after all the Signs and Wonders he hath ſhewed among you? In the *New Teſtament* alſo, the Phraſe, *to tempt God*, denoteth the ſame Thing: Thus[b] St. *Peter* ſpeaks to thoſe Phariſees that were zealous for the Obſervation of the *Moſaic Law*, though they were converted to the Chriſtian Faith, and contended, that the *Gentiles*, who became Chriſtians, might be circumciſed; *Why tempt ye God to put a Yoke upon their Necks?* i. e. Why do ye diſtruſt God's Favour to the *Gentiles*, SERM. V.

[a] *Exod.* xvii. 2, 3. [b] *Acts* xv. 10.

Serm. V. after he hath given ſo great a Proof of it, as the Effuſion of the Holy Ghoſt upon them?

Thus much for the Explanation of the Phraſe, *to tempt God.* And leſt ye be guilty of this Crime, let me exhort you to avoid two Things that naturally lead to it; which are, a preſumptuous Opinion of being under *God's peculiar Care*, or a *melancholy Diſtruſt* of his Providence.

By the firſt of which, Men are led to confide in God, as if he was under ſome particular Obligation to protect them; and therefore wilfully throw themſelves into Dangers, to try whether he will countenance their Raſhneſs; and provide for them, though they neglect themſelves, which is a very great Fault: For though we may and ought to depend upon God's Care and Goodneſs, and though we may confide in his Power and Wiſdom to protect us; yet, at the ſame Time, we ought not to neglect any Thing to ſecure ourſelves, and never to run into Danger becauſe we depend upon him; or do any unwarrantable Thing, under the Notion of being protected by him. This was the Crime the Devil would have perſuaded our Saviour to have committed; and

to

to that Purpoſe very readily miſapplied a Passage in the *Pſalms*, to try if he could not puſh him on to depend preſumptuouſly upon God's Protection; but he was too wiſe to be over-reached: And let us take Care that we are not drawn in to expect Divine Aſſiſtance, unleſs when we are doing our Duty. SERM. V.

THE ſecond Thing we are to avoid, leſt *we tempt God*, is, an unjuſt Diſtruſt of his Providence.

NOTHING can be a greater Affront to God, than ſuch a baſe Opinion of him: For we cannot look either on *ourſelves*, or the *World* about us, but we find a thouſand Inſtances of his Favours.

IF we conſider *ourſelves*; he hath not only given us Life in common with other Creatures, but he hath been pleaſed to endow us with Wiſdom and Underſtanding, making us *a little lower than the Angels, and crowning us with Glory and Honour* [a].

IF we obſerve the Things about us; their Beauty, Variety, and Order, at once amaze and delight us; but when we conſider, that God hath made us to have Dominion over theſe Works of his Hands, and that all

[a] *Pſal.* viii. 5.

Serm. V. theſe Things were made for our Uſe and Pleaſure, this is ſuch an Argument for our Truſt and Dependence upon his Goodneſs, as ſhould afford us the greateſt Conſolation.

Do we labour under Misfortunes or Calamities? Are we afflicted with bodily Wants or Infirmities? This ſhould not tempt us to diſtruſt God: For his Power is a ſure Ground of Confidence in all Diſtreſſes; and he *is able to do for us exceeding abundantly above all that we aſk or think*[a]. He is the Creator and Governor of all Things; nothing can happen contrary to his Will; and whatſoever he pleaſeth, he can bring to paſs, whether it be in Heaven or in Earth: Be not therefore too ſolicitous, or fearful; repoſe a pious Confidence in him; commit yourſelves to him by earneſt Prayer, and implore his Help, for he will never fail you. It was ſuch a religious Confidence and Truſt in God, that made holy *David* thus comfort himſelf in the Midſt of his Misfortunes. *My Soul, wait thou only upon God, for my Expectation is from him. He only is my Rock, and my Salvation; he is my Defence; I ſhall not be moved*[b]. All my Safety and Truſt is in God, for on Men there is

[a] *Epheſ.* iii. 20. [b] *Pſal.* lxxii. 5, 6.

is no Dependence; for, *ſurely, Men of low Degree are Vanity*, they are too vain and giddy to put Confidence in; and *Men of high Degree* are treacherous and deceitful, *they are altogether lighter than Vanity itſelf.* SERM. V.

And we ought alſo to be of the ſame Mind, who believe, *that all Power belongeth unto God.*

And, that we may not be diſappointed, let us be good Men, and ſincere Chriſtians; and then we may with Safety commit the Keeping of our Souls and Bodies to him, we may at all Times truſt in Him; for *in the Lord Jehovah there is everlaſting Strength.*

SERMON VI.

On a FUTURE STATE.

PROV. xiv. 32. latter Part.

——*The Righteous hath Hope in his Death.*

SERM. VI.

THESE Words intimate to us the Hopes and Expectations that good Men have of a future State; in which they ſhall be rewarded for all the Afflictions they have undergone for the Cauſe of God, and live for ever with him in inexpreſſible Felicity.

AND, in diſcourſing upon them, I will endeavour to ſhew,

WHAT Arguments may be drawn from Reaſon for a future State; in which good Men ſhall be rewarded, and wicked Men puniſhed, according to their Works.

WHOSOEVER believeth the Goſpel, cannot doubt of a future State, which is there re-

revealed with the greateſt Certainty: But, beſides Revelation, there are many natural Arguments for the *Immortality of the Soul* and a *future State*, which Men have generally agreed in, and have all the Degrees of Probability that the Nature of the Thing will admit. As, SERM. VI.

1ſt, If the Soul be not to live for ever in another State; whence is it, that Men are ſo deſirous of perpetuating their Memory? This muſt come from a Suppoſition, that they themſelves ſhall live in another State, and be ſenſible of the Honour that is done to their Memories. But if God hath made us mortal, and there are no Hopes of a Life beyond this, we ſhould have had none of theſe vain Deſires imprinted in us; and no Man would have run into any Troubles, or have riſked any of the Enjoyments of this Life, if he ſhould not be ſenſible of the Honour that was to be given him.

If the Soul be mortal, why alſo have Men, in all Ages, been terrified for the Commiſſion of thoſe Sins, which never Eye ſaw, nor Ear heard, and which no Perſon knew any Thing of but themſelves; if they did not believe, that they were to live in an-

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another World, and be there punished for the Sins they had committed in this?

Whence also is it, that good and pious Men are so full of Comfort and Rapture in their private Retirements, where no one is conscious of their virtuous Choices, and holy Actions, but from a stedfast Hope, that they shall be rewarded for their just and honest Works?

And, that these Desires are not vain, without any Foundation to support them, may be inferred from this, *viz.* That it would be a Reproach to a good and wise Creator, to endow or bestow on any Creature Appetites or Inclinations to a higher Degree of Happiness than its Nature is capable of: And, as in all other Instances, there is no Desire in Man, but what has some Object to answer it; so may we conclude, that this Desire of *Immortality*, and our Hopes and Fears consequent thereon, are founded on Reason; and, that God hath made us for Immortality.

2*dly*, A future State may be inferred from a just Reflection on the Attributes of God.

If we reflect upon the *Divine Goodness*, we must naturally conclude, that as that

Attribute inclined him at first to give Life to so many Kinds of inferior Creatures, so it would influence him to give to other Creatures greater Degrees of Perfection: And, as his infinite *Power* can make Creatures of a spiritual and immortal Nature, we have Reason to conclude, that he hath done so; and, that Man hath something in him of such a spiritual Nature. SERM. VI.

But further: It is agreeable to the *Justice* of the Divine Being, that the Souls of Men should live in another World, because no Man here can make any certain Judgment of God's *Love* or *Hatred* towards Men by what befals them now; and, therefore, if the Sovereign Lord and Governor of the World be just and holy, it is very natural to believe, that there will come a Time, when this just and righteous Being will make a Difference between the Righteous and the Wicked, and that every Eye shall see it, and bear Witness to it.

Now we see, many Times, that Wickedness is exalted and prospers, and that Virtue is depressed and despised; that many good Men, that deserve well of the World, suffer great Hardships, even for the Sake of that Good they do, or have done: And, on

Serm. VI. the contrary, that Prosperity is poured into the Lap of the Wicked, and every Thing they take in Hand is crowned with Success: All which, was there no Life after this, would be a Stain and Blemish upon Divine Providence; because then many good Men would lose their Reward, and many wicked Men escape that Punishment which is their Desert; which would confound all our Notions of Good and Evil, as well as impeach the *Justice* of God; so that there is no Way to clear up the Justice of God's Dispensations to Men, but upon the Supposition of a future State.

To pretend, in Answer to this, that a virtuous Man is sufficiently happy in himself, though there should be no future State, will be found, upon Enquiry, not to be true: For though the virtuous Man doth find an inward Pleasure in the Discharge of his Duty; and though Virtue is worthy to be chosen for its own Sake, without Respect to any Recompence or Reward; yet, Virtue is often attended with many Sufferings and Calamities; so that, in a thousand Instances, if there were no Hopes of a good Life being some Time or other rewarded, the virtuous Man would be very miserable; and

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if there were no Reward hereafter for Virtue, few Men would be so fond of it, from a Consideration of its native Beauty, as to chuse to be miserable for its Sake. They would only chuse to practise it with such Limits and Restrictions as were agreeable to them, nor avoid the Gratifications of Vice, but where it would be prejudicial, and debar them of other Pleasures equally as delightful. SERM. VI.

3*dly*, A FUTURE *State* may be inferred from the Nature of the human Soul.

IF we consider those excellent Powers of the Soul, *Perception*, *Memory*, and *Will*, we shall soon be convinced, that the Soul is a Substance of a different Nature from that which the Body is composed of: Indeed, to say what that Substance is, it is impossible; but its Powers and Operations are so essentially different from, that we may be sure it is not of the same Nature with, Matter; and therefore we may justly conclude, that as it is of a different Nature, so is it also evident, from many Operations, that it can perform without the Assistance of the Body, even while they exist together, that it may live when the Body is dissolved and laid in the Dust; and therefore, that

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Serm. VI. it must be of a spiritual and divine Nature, and consequently *immortal*.

But when we say the Soul is immortal, it must not be understood as if it could exist of itself, independent of God; for as he at first created it, so can he with the same Ease destroy it again; but that it is made of such Principles, that it cannot be destroyed by any of those Accidents that affect the Body; but will retain the same Powers of Perception and Understanding, when separated from it.

The Happiness also that the Soul is capable of enjoying, distinct from the Body, even whilst it lives in it, is a very good Argument, that the Soul will exist, when the other is no more.

And, that the Soul hath Pleasures of her own, and that they are more satisfactory, and more to be desired, than the Pleasures of the Body, every one must acknowledge, but they who are wholly sunk in Vice and Sensuality: For, who doth not perceive, that he hath more Satisfaction in the Contemplation of Wisdom and Virtue, than in the Pleasures of Sense and other corporal Delights? And, who doth not esteem and set a greater Value upon himself, for his

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Improvement in Learning, and Wiſdom, and Knowledge, than in the moſt refined Pleaſures of the Body? SERM. VI.

On the contrary: In our calmer Moments, when Reflection and Reaſon are not hindered from giving their Judgment; who is there that doth not in his Heart thoroughly deſpiſe and hate himſelf for giving Way to his ſenſual Appetites; that is not aſhamed of being baffled by his Paſſions, and doth not heartily wiſh that he had acted otherwiſe?

Now, if the Soul was not of a Nature different from the Body, how is it credible, that it ſhould deſpiſe itſelf for following its natural Inclinations? And, if Men were not conſcious, that they have ſomething in them of a diviner Principle, why ſhould they eſteem the Pleaſures of the Soul more honourable than thoſe of the Body? This, certainly, is ſufficient to make us determine that our Souls are *immortal.*

Why alſo are we uneaſy when we reflect on our bodily Pleaſures, and always pleaſed when we recollect our virtuous Actions, but that the Soul hath an Happineſs diſtinct from that of the Body, and independent of it?

But

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BUT further yet: The Nature of the human Soul is ſuch, that this Life is too ſhort a Space of Time for it to attain to that Perfection it ſeems to have been made for. We are cut off here oftentimes before we have taſted of the Tree of Knowledge, which Fruit we ſo much long for; and though it ſhould be our Fortune to live longer, what great Impediments do we meet with in our Purſuit after Wiſdom? The neceſſary Cares for common Subſiſtence demand a great Portion of our Time; and human Frailties, and external Accidents, hinder us in our Search for it: We are ſenſible, that if we were not incumbered with theſe dull and cumberſome Bodies, our Souls would be more capable of Improvement, and entertained in a more delighful Manner, than they now are.

AND can we think, that the *all-wiſe Creator* formed ſo noble a Principle within us, to laſt no longer than ſixty or ſeventy Years? No, without Doubt, he did not: He deſigned us for another State, and hath made the Soul of ſuch a Temperament, as will qualify it for its immortal Life, and with a Capacity of comprehending all thoſe Treaſures of Knowledge and Wiſdom, which

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are above our Power of attaining to in this World. SERM. VI.

THE Force of this Argument, for the Immortality of the Soul, from its Perception and Underſtanding, ſome have dreaded to admit, for Fear of being obliged (as they imagined) to allow, that the Spirits of Beaſts might by the ſame Reaſon be immortal, as well as ours, they having, as well as we, a reaſonable Principle that directs their Actions; and if that be thought a ſufficient Reaſon to allow that there is ſomething immortal within us, then, by the ſame Reaſon, it cannot be denied to conclude as much in Favour of them. But as to this I obſerve, that it doth not follow, though we allow them to have a rational Principle within them, that it muſt therefore be immortal; for the Immortality of our Souls doth not depend ſo much upon their being, as we may imagine, *immaterial Subſtances*, as upon the *Will of God*, who has deſigned them to live for ever; for though by being immaterial, they may not die with our Bodies, yet their Immortality muſt at laſt be reſolved into the *Will of God*; for, otherwiſe, as he made, ſo can he annihilate them at his Pleaſure. And, that the Spirits of Beaſts die with

Serm. VI. their Bodies, may be, becauſe the End for which they were created being anſwered, God ſuffers them to periſh: And that it is ſo, we may learn from *Solomon*, in theſe Words; *Who knoweth the Spirit of Man that goeth upward, and the Spirit of the Beaſt that goeth downward to the Earth*[a]? By which Expreſſion, *to go downward to the Earth*, is to be underſtood, that the Spirits of Beaſts die with their Bodies.

But not to trouble you any longer with ſuch nice Speculations, which tend rather to amuſe than edify, the Arguments I have made uſe of, to prove the *natural Immortality of the Soul*, have been eſteemed ſo convincing, that Men have, in all Ages, founded their Belief of a future State upon them. Indeed, in the dark Times of Heatheniſm, many good Men had ſome Doubts and Suſpicions about it; but, in general, the World were perſuaded of this great Truth. Men felt ſomething within them that told them of their Immortality; and the wiſer and better they were, ſo much the more forward were they of embracing the Opinion; though they could not, by the mere Light of Reaſon and Philoſophy, attain ſuch

[a] *Eccleſ.* iii. 21.

ſuch a full Perſuaſion of it as excluded all Doubt. *We believe*, ſays *Tully*, *that the Souls of Men do abide after Death, by the Conſent of all Nations.* And *Seneca* ſays [a], *When we diſpute about the Immortality of the Soul, the general Conſent of Men, either fearing or worſhipping the infernal Powers, is of no ſmall Moment with us.* But, in another Place, *Tully* ſays, *I believe, that the Fathers, thoſe eminent Perſons, and my particular Friends, are ſtill alive; and if*, ſays he, *I err in this, I am pleaſed with it.* SERM. VI.

Now, from whence could all this come, but from the general Voice and Senſe of Nature? And were it not ſo, it could never have been preſerved, as it was, amidſt all the various Revolutions of Nations and Religions, and amidſt ſo great a Stupidity and Ignorance, as did, in ſome Ages, prevail among them.

THE natural Inferences from this Diſcourſe are,

THAT if we are to live in another State, and be there rewarded or puniſhed, according to the Good or Evil we have done here, it concerns us alſo to behave in this World

[a] Epiſt. 117.

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as Persons who are to give an Account of every Thing we do or say in the next.

THIS was an Inference that the Heathens themselves drew from this Doctrine: And we Christians should be ashamed to be behind-hand with them, upon whom the Light of the Gospel never shone, and who had not that Certainty we have to inforce their Practice.

THEIR Hopes were clouded with Suspicions and Surmises; but we have the most certain Assurance, that our Expectations shall not fail, who have *Life and Immortality brought to Light through the Gospel*[a].

ONE would imagine, that a Doctrine so agreeable would not want any Motive to win upon us, either to believe the Thing, or to endeavour to prepare ourselves to enjoy it. But, alas! there have been, and still are Men, that do all in their Power to persuade themselves and others to disbelieve it. And the Reason of this Proceeding is the same now as it was then; *viz.* The Punishments the Wicked are to undergo, made them, who were unwilling to part with their Vices, try all their Subtilty to destroy this Opinion. And the present Infidel sets

[a] 2 *Tim.* i. 10.

ſets himſelf againſt this comfortable Doc- SERM. VI.
trine, that he may ſmother the Upbraidings and Miſgivings of his own Mind, and enjoy his Wickedneſs without Fear or Controul. But what an uncomfortable Situation is this, that forces Men, for the Quiet of their own Conſciences, to throw off and diſcard the moſt deſirable Truth in the whole World?

THE common Condition of Living is loaded enough with Burdens, without laying any more upon ourſelves, by endeavouring to deſtroy the Comforts of another State, where all the Hardſhips, that at preſent afflict us, will be no more.

THE certain and unavoidable Evils of Life, the various Wants, and common Infirmities, are ſufficient to grieve and torment us, without cutting off the agreeable Proſpect, that a View and Perſuaſion of a future State affords us.

WHAT a miſerable Condition muſt ſuch Men be in, who have ſo lived, as to make it their Intereſt to be upon the Level with the Brutes? For, certainly, no Man, who hath behaved himſelf honeſtly and piouſly, and to whom, upon that Account, there are Hopes, that he may one Day be a happy

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Partaker of that State, would eaſily be ſo great an Enemy to himſelf, and his own Happineſs, as to diſpute againſt it.

THEREFORE we may be ſure, that it is their Wickedneſs which makes Men in this Article *Unbelievers*; it is the Love of *Unrighteouſneſs* and *Debauchery* that makes Men ſhut their Eyes againſt the Light; they *love Darkneſs rather than Light*; and therefore wilfully ſtop their Ears againſt all Means of being better informed; they are Deſpiſers of thoſe Things that are good, *and Lovers of Pleaſure more than Lovers of God.*

LET me therefore, in the laſt Place, intreat you, that ye be not deceived; for were there none but barely *probable Arguments* for a future State, as there are the ſtrongeſt that the Nature of Thing will bear; yet, no Man, in his Senſes, would hazard the Chance of loſing it; but would chuſe to do that which is the moſt likely Method of obtaining it.

AND as it is Piety alone that can give a Man any comfortable Hopes of enjoying it, let me exhort you to the Practice of that, which will give you the greateſt Complacency in your own Mind, and begin that

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Happineſs here, that you are to enjoy to all Eternity. SERM. VI.

Would wicked Men but do the Will of God, they would ſoon know of the Doctrine, whether it be of him: They would ſoon be convinced, that they had been offering a Violence to Reaſon, by attempting to defraud themſelves of thoſe natural Expectations of an Hereafter, which are interwoven with human Nature, and cannot, without great Difficulty, be taken from it.

The Practice of Religion clears up all thoſe Doubts, and diſpoſes the Mind to extirpate every Thing that is contrary to its own Happineſs. All Objections againſt Religion vaniſh, when a Man's Practice is right; that gives him the ſtrongeſt Conviction, and removes all Difficulties, that the Devil, or his Paſſions, may ſuggeſt to him.

In a Word: Are our Souls *immortal?* Let us endeavour ſo much the more to take Care of them; for, if we once loſe them, they are loſt for ever: And becauſe an inordinate Love and Fondneſs for this World is too often the Cauſe of our Neglect in this Point, let not the *Deceitfulneſs of Riches* make us regardleſs of Futurity; let our principal View be towards another World,

SERM. VI. and our Hearts be there fixed, where true Joys are to be found.

LET us conform ourſelves to God in the Holineſs and Purity of our Lives, that we may be capable of enjoying him in the next World; for we muſt be like him, before we can ſee him as he is: Nothing but perfect Holineſs can make us capable of enjoying the Divine Being. For if, by impure and wicked Lives, we have made ourſelves unlike him, when we die, we can have no Communion with him, but ſhall *go to our Place*, and inherit *the Portion of Sinners.*

THOUGH all Men ſhall live for ever in the next World; yet, the *Righteous* only *hath Hope in his Death.* He only ſhall be happy in a future State, who hath lived ſoberly, and righteouſly, and godly, in this preſent World.

Let not, therefore, *thine Heart envy Sinners, but be thou in the Fear of the Lord all the Day long; for, ſurely, there is an End, and thine Expectation ſhall not be cut off*[a].

[a] *Prov.* xxiii. 17, 18.

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SERMON VII.

On GOOD-FRIDAY,

ISAIAH liii. 5.

He was wounded for our Tranſgreſſions, he was bruiſed for our Iniquities: The Chaſtiſement of our Peace was upon him, and with his Stripes we are healed.

THIS is Part of that celebrated Chapter of *Iſaiah*; the Whole of which is ſuch a plain, eaſy, and exact Deſcription of the Sufferings and Death of the Son of Man, that one would rather ſuppoſe the Prophet had attended our Bleſſed Saviour to *Mount Calvary*; or, with *Simon*, had carried his Croſs, and been Spectator of his Sufferings and Agonies, than that he had wrote it ſeven hundred Years before. SERM. VII.

THE myſtic Dreſs, in which moſt of the Prophecies of the *Old Teſtament* are cloathed, render them obſcure and difficult to be underſtood, and, ſometimes, liable to different Interpretations. But this is ſo clear and

SERM. VII. and evident, that was a Perſon ignorant of the Holy Scriptures, to read this Chapter, he could not but think it a Narration of Matter of Fact, rather than a Prophecy of ſomething to come.

YET, for all this, there have been Attempts made to force another Meaning upon this Prophecy, to deſtroy, if poſſible, the literal Interpretation of the Words. For there are ſome ſo ungrateful and ſo unwilling to be ſaved, that they ſpurn at and deſpiſe every Thing that tends to make them believe in our Bleſſed Saviour. What can be the Reaſon of their Humour I cannot conceive, or what Advantages can ariſe from it. This much I think; That if Chriſtianity had not its Baſis ſupported by the ſtrongeſt Reaſon; if it had not, as we may glory it has, the moſt convincing Arguments to force its Certainty; and if the Merit of our Saviour's Death could not be proved, as it certainly can, to be a Satisfaction for the Sins of the whole World, and to be accepted as ſuch by God; yet, a rational Man would believe it upon a *Poſſibility* of its being true, when the Belief of it brings ſo much Comfort to the Soul; and would be unwilling to be convinced it was

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an Error, when he ſhould loſe ſo much Pleaſure by his Knowledge. But as there are none here, I believe, but who are ſatisfied of the Truth of our holy Religion, and the Merits of Chriſt's Death, in atoning for the Sins of the whole World, I ſhall proceed to what my Text, and the Occaſion of our Meeting, demands of me. *He was wounded for our Tranſgreſſions, he was bruiſed for our Iniquities: The Chaſtiſement of our Peace was upon him, and with his Stripes we are healed.* SERM. VII.

THE Words before us diſcover two Particulars, *viz.* The Sufferings of our Bleſſed Saviour; and, the Reaſon of them.

1ſt, As to the Sufferings of Chriſt: Let us take a View of his Misfortunes, and ſee whether they anſwer to what the Prophet foretels of him. *Iſaiah* deſcribes him as one that hath *no Form nor Comelineſs; and when we ſhall ſee him, there is no Beauty that we ſhould deſire him. He is deſpiſed and rejected of Men, a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with Grief; and we hid, as it were, our Faces from him. He was deſpiſed, and we eſteemed him not; ſurely, he hath borne our Griefs, and carried our Sorrows, yet we did eſteem him*

SERM. VII. *ſtricken, ſmitten of God, and afflicted.* And again [a]; *He was oppreſſed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his Mouth; he is brought as a Lamb to the Slaughter, and as a Sheep before her Shearers is dumb, ſo opened he not his Mouth.* Thus far the Prophet; and now let us ſee how far our Saviour anſwers to the Deſcription.

THE Occaſion of our preſent aſſembling together, is to commemorate the Crucifixion and Death of our Bleſſed Lord.

BUT as this was the Cloſe and Period of his Sufferings, it may not be unneceſſary, before we take a View of this laſt Scene, to obſerve the other Parts of his Life; ſince we can never be too particular in recounting what he endured for us, or ever dwell too long upon any of his Sufferings. Let us go back therefore to the Nativity of the Son of God, and attend him with Humility from his Manger to his Croſs.

HIS firſt Entrance into this World was unhappy. Indeed, the new Star, that made its Appearance at his Birth, was a magnificent Sign to the World, that the King of it was born into it. Yet, whilſt this glorious Appearance ſhone in Heaven, its Creator was

[a] *Iſaiah* liii. 7.

was in a Manger on Earth; deſtitute of the common Conveniences of Life, and a Companion of the Beaſts that periſh. SERM. VII.

BUT this was only the Beginning, and the leaſt of his Sufferings: His Infancy rendered him incapable of being affected with this; nor was his flying into *Egypt* of Concern to him. But what he ſuffered after, was a continued Series of Misfortunes. For though we have no Account in particular of what he underwent whilſt he lived retired with his Father and Mother; yet, we may juſtly ſuppoſe, from the Circumſtances they were in, which were very low, that he laboured under all thoſe Afflictions and Diſappointments, that a mean Fortune and Poverty naturally expoſeth us to.

BUT the Afflictions he met with, in the Courſe of his Miniſtry, from his extream Poverty, from the Malice and Wickedneſs of the World, their Oppoſition to him, and their ungrateful and ungenerous Reflections upon the Miracles that he wrought before their Eyes, are too evident in the Holy Goſpels. His Poverty was ſo very great, that we once find him even at the Expence of a Miracle to pay Tribute for himſelf and Diſciples. But the ungenerous Uſage he met

SERM. VII. met with, whilſt he was curing their Sick, and healing their Infirmities, muſt affect him with the deepeſt Concern; as there is nothing that wounds a great and generous Spirit more than to have thoſe good Offices, it delights to be employed in, conſtrued in an ill-natured Senſe. And, accordingly, we read, our Bleſſed Saviour was grieved for the Hardneſs of their Hearts. He was concerned, that his Works had no better Effect than to make their Condemnation the more deſerved; and, that all his Endeavours to make them happy, were vain and ineffectual. Yet, this was but Part of what he ſuffered! There was to be no Sorrow like unto his Sorrow: Every Day produced a new Scene of Trouble, and every Moment added to his Misfortunes; for Unhappineſs was to be his Lot here, and Bitterneſs of Soul the Portion of his Inheritance. And how movingly does he expreſs his unhappy State! *The Foxes have Holes, and the Birds of the Air have Neſts, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his Head*[a]. Every Part of his Creation, but he, was happy; agreeable to their ſeveral Conditions, they had Places of Repoſe to retreat to, when they wanted

[a] *Luke* ix. 58.

wanted Reſt; and of Safety, when they wanted Security. But the Son of Man had no Place of Repoſe that he could call his own; nor any where to retreat, to fence him from the Malice of his Enemies. The World, the Fleſh, and the Devil, warred againſt him, as their common Enemy, and perſecuted him from Place to Place. The ungrateful Multitude, while he teaches them the Way to Heaven, attempt to ſtone him, and would wickedly deprive him of his own Life, whilſt he inſtructs them how to live for ever. SERM. VII.

BUT well might his Enemies perſecute him, when they of his own Houſhold were againſt him. How contemptuouſly did they cry out, *Is not this the Carpenter, the Son of Mary, the Brother of James and Joſes, and of Juda and Simon? And they were offended at him*[a]. The Prejudice they had conceived from his low Education, made a deeper Impreſſion upon them, than the Miracles he had wrought before them could remove: Beſides, their Envy, that one, whom they thought their Equal, ſhould be greater than they, had hindered their Belief; which may be the Reaſon why a Prophet is never with-

[a] *Mark* vi. 3.

SERM. VII. without Honour, ſave in his own Country. But to dwell no longer upon this Part of his Life,

LET us attend him, with his Diſciples, to the Paſſover, where the Lamb of God offered himſelf for us; and reflect upon what he ſuffered.

THIS is the moſt ſurprizing, the moſt moving Scene that ever was; and let us therefore take a particular View of it, that it may affect us more ſtrongly, and ſtrike a deeper Impreſſion upon the Memory. Let us, with the Eye of Faith, ſuppoſe we ſee our Bleſſed Saviour going to the Garden with his Diſciples, after the Traitor *Judas* was gone to betray him. One would think it was impoſſible for one, who had been Eye-Witneſs of his Maſter's Life, had obſerved his Innocence, had ſeen his Miracles, and had the Happineſs of his private Inſtructions, to have betrayed him upon any Account. But what will poor Man refuſe to act, when he has once got the thirſty Dropſy of Covetouſneſs, and ſuffered that *Devil* to be Maſter of him! To leave therefore that unhappy wicked Man to be the Puniſher of his own Sin, let us, I ſay, ſuppoſe we ſee our Saviour in the Garden,

den, before his approaching Death, at his Devotions; and hear him cry out in the Bitterneſs of his Soul, *O my Father, if it be poſſible, let this cup paſs from me!* How ſharp muſt be the Pain he endured, that could force him to ſuch a Petition, and how heavy the Afflictions he labour'd under, that required an Angel from Heaven to ſupport him! How ſtrongly muſt his Body be diſorder'd, that could force Drops of Blood from it, inſtead of Sweat, and how violent muſt be the Anguiſh of his Soul, that was oppreſſed for the Iniquity of us all! SERM. VII.

FROM the Garden let us follow him to his Trial, forſaken of his Diſciples, ſurrounded with Enemies, and expoſed to all the Indignities, and Affronts, that the malicious Prieſts, and hypocritical Phariſees could uſe him with. He had ſtripped them of their pretended Robe of Righteouſneſs, and expoſed them in their proper Colours, which cauſed them to reſolve to take ſuch an Enemy to their Hypocriſy out of the Way; leſt he ſhould deſtroy the Veneration the People had for them. But how calmly did he hear his Accuſers? And how meekly did he endure their Revilings? He was, as *Iſaiah* had deſcribed him, *as a Lamb brought to the*

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Slaughter, and as a Sheep before her Shearers is dumb, ſo he opened not his Mouth. When the chief Prieſts had terrified *Pilate* with their crying out, that he was no Friend to *Cæſar*; that he was an Enemy to his Maſter, if he ſpared that King of the *Jews*, and thereby forced him to condemn him; how unconcerned did he hear the Sentence, and how patiently did he undergo his Scourging! To be mocked and reviled under Afflictions, affects human Nature the moſt ſenſibly next to Pain itſelf, becauſe the Misfortunes of the Afflicted ſeem to demand Pity from others, as a Part of common Humanity. But our Bleſſed Lord met with no ſuch kind Uſage; he was treated in the vileſt, and moſt barbarous Manner; and, as if the worſt of Men, had a moſt notorious Murderer preferred before him: He was clothed in the Purple of Majeſty, mocked with a pretended Adoration, crowned with a Crown of Thorns, and at laſt buffeted, and ſpit upon, and blaſphemouſly aſked to propheſy, who it was that ſmote him? But, as the Prophet had foretold, *he was deſpiſed, and we eſteemed him not*; and again, *he was numbered with the Tranſgreſſors.* He was led to be crucified together with Thieves and

Robbers; and, as if Partner in their Crimes, was Companion in their Sufferings; in ſuffering the worſt and vileſt Death, which nothing but the deepeſt Crimes could ever merit. The lingering Deaths of thoſe that were crucified, and the agonizing Pains they underwent, were the moſt terrible, that we can poſſibly imagine: What then muſt our Lord have endured upon the Croſs? To have his Hands and his Feet, the moſt tender and nervous Parts of the Body, pierced with Nails, muſt create the moſt violent Torment, the ſharpeſt Pain, and the ſtrongeſt Agonies poſſible. All this our Bleſſed Saviour ſuffered: But this was not all. To the Pains and Agonies of his Body, were joined the Pains and Anguiſh of his Soul: And, inſtead of having Angels from Heaven to ſupport him, as they did in the Garden of *Gethſemane*, his Father poured out his Wrath upon him, and puniſhed him for the complicated Guilt of all Mankind; which was ſo violent, that it forced him, in the Extremity of his Sufferings, to cry out, *My God, my God, why haſt thou forſaken me?* SERM. VII.

THUS was the Son of God wounded, but for our Tranſgreſſions; thus was he bruiſed, but for our Iniquities: For he did no Sin himſelf,

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ſelf, neither was Guile found in his Mouth. For, that he might not contract Original Sin by being the Offspring of Man and Woman, the Holy Ghoſt deſcended from Heaven upon the Virgin *Mary*, and ſhe conceived him in a miraculous Manner. For, had he been born by the Help of Man, he had been tainted with the Pollution of our Nature; and, as a bad Tree cannot bring forth good Fruit, ſo he would have been unable to have ſaved others, who could not have ſaved himſelf. But, *We have an High-Prieſt of good Things to come, who by a greater and more perfect Tabernacle, not made with Hands; that is to ſay, not of this Building: Neither by the Blood of Goats and Calves, but by his own Blood, he entered in once, into the Holy-Place, having obtained eternal Redemption for us. For, if the Blood of Bulls, and of Goats, and the Aſhes of an Heifer ſprinkling the Unclean, ſanctifieth to the purifying of the Fleſh; how much more ſhall the Blood of Chriſt, who, thro' the eternal Spirit, offered himſelf without Spot to God, purge your Conſcience from dead Works to ſerve the living God*[a]? If then, all his Sufferings were upon our Account; if all the Indignities he was expoſed to, and the Affronts

[a] *Heb.* ix. 11, 12, 13, 14.

Affronts he met with, were to ſatisfy the Juſtice of God for our Wickedneſs; and he died, that he might open the Gates of Heaven for us; how ought we to eſteem, and love our Bleſſed Redeemer, who did all this for us? SERM. VII.

In human Converſe and Society, we think it the moſt evident Proof of a Friend, that he is willing to hazard his Life for the Advantage of the other. And St. *Paul* ſays, in one of his Epiſtles, *That it is poſſible, that a good Man may lay down his Life for his Friend.* But, to die for Enemies, for Rebels, and Apoſtates, to be crucified for thoſe that hate us, and deſpitefully uſe us, is ſuch an eminent Proof of Love and Goodneſs, that none but the Son of God, who is infinitely good, can ever ſhew.

And then, his Willingneſs to do all this, is a Conſideration, that will add infinitely to the Value of it. For, he not only ſuffered, but all his Sufferings, as well as his Actions, were the pure Effect of his own Will, without any Neceſſity or Conſtraint to force his Obedience. For it was not with Jeſus Chriſt, as with other Men. Their Birth and Quality, their State and Condition, their Death and Exit fall not under

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their own Cognizance; or, is any Part of their Choice, but is impoſed upon them by Nature, or Providence: And the greateſt Praiſe due to any Man, is, that he can bear his allotted State and Circumſtances patiently. But, as to our Lord, all was his free Choice. The Meanneſs of his Birth, the Contemptibleneſs of his State, the Troubles of his Life, and the Shame, and Bitterneſs of his Death, were all known to him before-hand: And yet, he willingly and freely ſubmitted to them. He made himſelf of no Reputation, and became obedient to Death: So he humbled himſelf in a moſt wonderful and aſtoniſhing Manner, to the Will of God; to all the Methods of his Counſel, and all the Contrivances of his Wiſdom, for manifeſting his Mercy and Goodneſs to Mankind, and for accompliſhing their Redemption and Salvation; to which, he was not otherwiſe obliged, than by his own voluntary Undertaking. For, as to his Divine Nature he was equal to God, and therefore free and independent, and ſubject to none. And tho' as Man he owed Obedience, yet, being altogether free from Sin, he was not liable to the Curſe of the Law, nor obnoxious to thoſe Evils, Troubles and Calamities, which,

which, for Sin, are inflicted upon Mankind. But it was his Meat and Drink to do the Will of God, and not only, when the Commands were eaſy and agreeable, but alſo, when ſevere and heavy, and ſuch as Nature ſtruggled with, and was averſe to. For, when his Soul was exceeding ſorrowful, even unto Death, upon the ſad Apprehenſions of his Sufferings; tho' he went and prayed, *O my Father, if it be poſſible, let this Cup paſs from me:* Yet we find, he immediately ſubmitted; *nevertheleſs, not as I will, but as thou wilt.* And again, *O my Father, if this Cup may not paſs away from me, unleſs I drink it, thy Will be done.* SERM. VII.

THUS we ſee how kind our Bleſſed Saviour was, and how willing to ſuffer, to make Reconciliation with God for us; which muſt heighten, when we conſider the Impoſſibility of our effecting by ourſelves the Merits of his Death, and make us more ſenſible of the Kindneſs and Advantage we have received.

To have a Kindneſs done by one, who was under no Obligation to do it; and who, yet, was the only Perſon, that could do it for us, ſhould inſpire us with the moſt grateful Acknowledgments, and the moſt

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ſincere Affection and Love towards him, as our greateſt Benefactor. For, if the Son of Man had not died to ſave us, we could never have ſaved ourſelves, or ever worked out our Salvation; but muſt have been for ever unhappy, for ever miſerable!

How wretched then ſhould we have been, without any Hope or Remedy in this Vale of Tears, for ever incapable of obtaining Peace with God; if the everlaſting, the only begotten Son of the Father had not come down from Heaven for us, and for our Salvation, and offered himſelf a pure, and holy, and acceptable Sacrifice to God for us!

THUS did Chriſt act and ſuffer upon our Account: He was born, he lived and died, to waſh away our Sins with his own Blood, and to re-inſtate us into his Father's Favour. And how vaſtly indebted are we to him? What mighty Obligations are we not under, to love, to admire and adore him, who hath done ſuch great Things for us? But to love him as we ought, we muſt hate every Thing that he hated, and love whatſoever he loved. As there can be no true and ſincere Friendſhip, till our Wills and Inclinations are the ſame with his, we muſt avoid every Thing that may poſſibly lead us into Temptation;

and

and ſhun all the Allurements of the World, that the Devil is ſtill ingenious to ſet before us in the moſt engaging Light that his Malice can contrive. But above all, we muſt be particularly careful to avoid thoſe Temptations, that our natural Conſtitution is moſt open to. For, if we indulge ourſelves in the Enjoyment of any Vice, we love what he hated; and therefore muſt expect no Returns of Kindneſs from him, who died to ſave none but thoſe that would be obedient to his Commands, and would be holy as he is holy. Which, yet, we muſt not underſtand in the ſtricteſt Senſe; nor did our Saviour expect that of us. He knows, as he was Man himſelf, the Infirmities of human Nature, and will make all the Allowances, that the moſt juſt Judge can, for the Omiſſions of our Duty; for it is not *Perfection*, but *Sincerity* that he requires. SERM. VII.

But then, our Imperfection ſhould teach us Humility, it ſhould learn us to have humble and modeſt Thoughts of ourſelves, and depreſs all vain and elevated Opinions of our own Virtues. We find our Lord reproving the Man for calling him good; ſaying unto him, *Why calleſt thou me good? There is none that is good but God?* So modeſt was he, that he diſ-

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discountenanced every Attempt, to give him, even, the just Praise that his Virtue and Goodness merited. How, then, should we behave ourselves, and how careful should we be to depress all exalted Notions of our own Goodness, whose best Actions are mixed with Frailty and Error, and tainted with the Imperfection of our Nature!

But to the Love of God, let us join, as a Consequence that should ever be united with it, the Love of our Neighbour. St. *John* tells us, *if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.* We should imitate, as far as our Frailty will permit us, the Life and Actions of our Blessed Saviour, and follow, as exactly as we can, that divine Exemplar. When we meet with any that are destitute of the common Supports of Life, we should feed them in their Necessity, as far as we are able. Indeed, we cannot work Miracles, as our Saviour did, to supply the Wants of others: We cannot, if we have but five Loaves and two Fishes, feed four or five Thousand, but we may give one at least, if we cannot spare more; and if it proceeds from an honest and free Heart, it will be accepted before God, and we shall in no wise lose our Reward.

But,

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But, laſtly: As the moſt proper Inference at this Time; let us imitate our Maſter, in bearing patiently the Injuries and Affronts we may meet with. There is no ſtronger Argument of a great and generous Spirit, than an Unwillingneſs to reſent an Injury; it looks as if the Man that was poſſeſſed of that Temper, was ſenſible of the Imperfection of human Nature, and was willing to correct and amend it. And we Chriſtians therefore, who ought to be perfect in every Virtue, ſhould follow our Maſter's Example, and be above the Reſentment of thoſe Injuries and Affronts, we may meet with from a froward and ungrateful World. No ill Uſage ſhould ever prompt us to Revenge, which is a Paſſion that doth not become a rational Creature, much leſs a Chriſtian. And when we find the Vice gathering in our Soul, we ſhould reſiſt it, by reflecting how much our Saviour ſuffered, from the Malice of Men, and how well he bore the Uſage. And this would be, to act as becomes one that profeſſeth Chriſtianity, and hopes to have an Advantage from the Death of Chriſt: For, tho' by his Death he hath opened the Gates of Heaven, that were before barred againſt us; yet, he will, nevertheleſs,

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theleſs, ſuffer none to enter in; but thoſe, that follow the Rules and Duties he hath enjoined us.

LET us therefore, like good Servants, make a right Uſe of our Maſter's Favour: And let us not, whilſt we exclaim againſt *Judas* for *betraying* him, and againſt the *Jews*, for being the *Authors of his Crucifixion*, betray him again, as that *Traitor* did, and crucify him afreſh, by our Diſobedience to his Commands.

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SERMON VIII.

On a LATE or DEATH-BED REPENTANCE.

LUKE xxiii. 43.

Verily I ſay unto thee, To Day ſhalt thou be with me in Paradiſe.

AS the Deſign of our Bleſſed Saviour's Coming into the World, was the Good and Happineſs of Mankind, ſo he never let ſlip any Opportunity of promoting that Work which he had undertaken to accompliſh. SERM. VIII.

IN the Courſe of his Miniſtry he worked many and ſurprizing Miracles, that he might induce Men to believe in his Name, and never ſhewed ſo great a Concern, as when he found them obſtinately ſet againſt their own Happineſs.

WITH

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WITH what Tenderneſs and Compaſſion, do we hear him addreſs himſelf to the Multitude, *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you Reſt*[a].

How pathetically does he mourn over *Jeruſalem*, at his Entrance into it! *O Jeruſalem, Jeruſalem, thou that killeſt the Prophets, and ſtoneſt them, which are ſent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy Children together, even as a Hen gathereth her Chickens under her Wings, and ye would not*[b]!

AT other Times we meet him encouraging and aſſiſting every virtuous Diſpoſition, and expreſſing his Approbation and Love for thoſe in whom he found the leaſt Seed of Goodneſs.

IN the Way to his Crucifixion, when a great many People and Women were bewailing and lamenting his unhappy Condition, with what Concern does he expreſs himſelf towards them! *Daughters of Jeruſalem, weep not for me, but for yourſelves, and for your Children*[c]! His own Sufferings ſeem to be forgotten, while he reflected upon the unſpeakable Calamities that were to befal the *Jewiſh* Nation, which were to be ſo great, that even barren Women, which were looked

[a] *Matt.* xi. 28. [b] *Matt.* xxiii. 37. [c] *Luke* xxiii. 28.

looked upon by the *Jews* as the moſt unhappy, ſhould have Cauſe to be pronounced bleſſed upon that Account, having no Children to mourn for. *For behold*, ſays he, *the Days are coming, in the which they ſhall ſay, Bleſſed are the barren, and the Wombs that never bare, and the Paps which never gave ſuck*[a].

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WHILE he was hanging upon the Croſs, and ſuffering all thoſe inexpreſſible Pains and Agonies, that ſuch a Death is ſubject to, we find him even offering up a Prayer to his Father for his Crucifiers: *Then ſaid Jeſus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do*[b].

AFTERWARDS, when the Rulers were deriding him, *ſaying, He ſaved others; let him ſave himſelf, if he be Chriſt, the choſen of God*[c]: And when, even one of the Malefactors, that was crucified with him, impiouſly railed on him; yet, no ſooner did the other Malefactor beg of our Bleſſed Saviour, that he would remember him, when he came into his Kingdom, but we find him giving Aſſurances to the believing and penitent Thief, That, that Day he ſhould be with him in Paradiſe.

THIS

[a] *Luke* xxiii. 29. [b] V. 34. [c] V. 35.

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THIS great and wonderful Promiſe of our Saviour, to a Perſon who had probably never ſeen him before, hath raiſed Hopes in many Chriſtians, that, tho' they do defer their Repentance; yet, if they repent at the laſt, they ſhall be ſaved.

THE great Danger of which Expectation, I will ſhew in the enſuing Diſcourſe; but, before I enter upon that, it will be neceſſary to conſider what there was, in the Behaviour and Confeſſion of this penitent Malefactor, that induced our Saviour to promiſe him eternal Happineſs.

ALL that the Scripture relates of him, is the ſerious, ſeaſonable and extraordinary Rebuke he gave to his Fellow Sufferer, for joining with the *Jews* in Reviling our Bleſſed Saviour: *Doſt not thou fear God, ſeeing thou art in the ſame Condemnation? And we indeed juſtly; for we receive the due Rewards of our Deeds: But this Man hath done nothing amiſs* [a]. From whence it is not improbable, but, that he had heard many Things that our Bleſſed Saviour had done, before he came to die with him; and there obſerving his wonderful Patience in bearing his Sufferings, and his Compaſſion for his Enemies,

[a] *Luke* xxiii. 40, 41.

Enemies, he concluded that this must be that *extraordinary Person* who was expected by his Countrymen the *Jews*, and therefore piously begged of him, that, when he was in Possession of that Kingdom, which was promised him by God, he would be so good, as to remember him. To which he answered, *To Day shalt thou be with me in Paradise*; or, in other Words, we may thus express the Sense of it: You ask, that, when I receive my Kingdom, I would be mindful of thee, but I will not defer thy Desires so long; before this Day is past, I will represent to thee Part of thy wished-for Happiness: Die without Fear; for as soon as ever thou art dead, divine Comforts will attend thee: *Thou shalt be with me in Paradise*, in that Place where the Souls of good Men are in Happiness. SERM. VIII.

This, indeed, was a prodigious Reward, for only a bare Confession of this Malefactor in our Blessed Saviour; but if we consider the Time, when this Confession was made, it can give no possible Encouragement to Sinners to depend upon that Repentance, which they defer to their last Hours.

This Person, as he was an Associate with Thieves and Robbers, was for his own Pre-

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ſervation obliged to ſecrete himſelf from the Converſation and Society of the reſt of the World; and therefore, probably, this was the firſt Time he had any Knowledge of our Saviour, or was acquainted with him. He might have no Call, no Day of Grace, before this Hour; and therefore he abuſed no Grace, nor reſiſted any Strivings of God's Holy Spirit, as they who profeſs themſelves Chriſtians, muſt have done. Beſides, he believed in our Bleſſed Saviour at a Time, and in ſuch an extraordinary Manner, as perhaps no Man ever did before, or ever will hereafter. He believed him to be the Son of God and the Lord of Life, when he was hanging upon the Croſs, and ſuffering the Pains of Death as an Impoſtor and a Malefactor. So that the Honour he did to Chriſt, by his Faith and Piety, on the Croſs, was perhaps more meritorious than the beſt ſpent Life of any other Man.

But for thoſe, who are baptized into the Name and Profeſſion of Jeſus Chriſt, to conceive any Hopes of receiving Mercy, provided they repent, as they call it, at their laſt Moments, is what they can never be ſecure of.

The

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The great End and Design of the Gospel, is Righteousness and Holiness of Life; to oblige us to *put off the old Man, to mortify the Flesh, with the Affections and Lusts, and to be renewed in the Spirit of our Minds; to purify ourselves from all Filthiness both of Flesh and Spirit, and to perfect Holiness in the Fear of God.*

Now, certainly, this will require great Care and Pains and Labour to compleat, and be no less than the Employment of our whole Life. And therefore, they who live in the Practice of any known Vice, and yet expect that God will accept of a few empty Resolutions, and fruitless Professions of ineffective Sorrow at the Time of their Death, will find themselves sadly disappointed.

Such Practices destroy the Necessity of a virtuous Life, and are inconsistent even with the very Design of repenting hereafter. For how can any Person, that hath the least Sincerity, design to repent of that Action, which yet at the present he resolves to commit? How can he intend seriously to wish hereafter, that he had never done such a Crime; when it will be impossible to undo it; which now, while it is in his Power, he

Rom. VIII. will by no Means be perſuaded to forbear doing? Is not this the greateſt Mockery of God? And do we not think, that he will ſeverely puniſh us for ſuch Inſolence? Without doubt, he will. Let me therefore intreat you, by the Mercies of God, and by the Sufferings of Jeſus Chriſt, that you will not deceive yourſelves. God will not accept any leſs Degree of Virtue and Holineſs, than he hath required in his holy Goſpel. He hath commanded us to be univerſally holy and virtuous; and as it is certain, that he will not accept a partial Obedience, ſo we have good Reaſon to expect that he will not be ſatisfied with a late and ineffectual Repentance. His Mercy indeed extends itſelf to every ſincere Penitent; but he is not obliged by his Mercy to reward thoſe, who obey him but in Part, or who may ſeem to repent when it is too late to renew their Obedience.

But ſuppoſing that a late Repentance be not ſo dangerous, how do we know, that we may have it in our Power to repent? Our Diſtemper may be of ſuch a Nature, as may render us incapable of doing it; the Violence of it may overturn our Reaſon, and impair our Memory; ſo that we ſhall be unable to

to beg of God, that he would pardon our Iniquities. SERM. VIII.

Or our Diſtemper may be ſo ſudden, as may put it out of our Power to repent. An Apoplexy, or a Convulſion may in a Moment ſhake us into Pieces; and then, what will all our vain Deſigns and Reſolutions of Repentance avail us?

But further, ſuppoſing our Diſtemper of ſuch a Sort, as not to hinder the Uſe of our Reaſon and Reflection, and that we are not hurried out of the World on ſuch a ſudden, as ſome are; yet, how do we know, that God will give us his Grace and Aſſiſtance, who have neglected his repeated Calls to Repentance, who have *turned his Grace into Wantonneſs*, and made his Goodneſs an Encouragement to Sin, which ſhould have been one of the ſtrongeſt Arguments in the World againſt it?

If, then, God ſhould withdraw his Holy Spirit from us, and leave us to our own Direction; I believe, we ſhould be very unable of ourſelves to do any Thing as of ourſelves.

How ſhould we be able to hate and diſcard thoſe Inclinations and Paſſions, which we have been humouring and pleaſing all

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our Lives? We find, by Continuance in any Custom, it grows familiar to us, and the Difficulty to break it off becomes greater, the longer we have used ourselves to it: So the Power of Sin is continually increased by wicked Habits; the Heart is more and more enslaved by evil Practices, the Conscience becomes stupified and insensible, the Judgment depraved, and incapable of distinguishing Things rightly; the Understanding blinded; the Will, and Affections more and more inclined and biassed to Evil; and the whole Man hardened thro' the Deceitfulness of Sin. And, what a sad and deplorable Condition is this for a Man to be in, in his last Moments! At this Time, of all others, we stand most in Need of God's Assistance, to support and comfort us. But how can such a Wretch, who hath neglected, all his Life-time, the secret Motions of God's Holy Spirit, expect any Favour and Mercy from him? Much rather may he not expect, that God will thus answer him? *Because I have called, and ye have refused, I have stretched out my Hand, and ye have not regarded, but have set at nought all my Counsel, and would none of my Reproof; I also will laugh at your Calamity, I will mock when*

your Fear cometh: When your Fear cometh as Deſolation, and your Deſtruction as a Whirlwind; when Diſtreſs and Anguiſh come upon you; then ſhall they call upon me, but I will not anſwer; they ſhall ſeek me early, but they ſhall not find me. SERM. VIII.

THEY who hope, that by their Tears and Importunities they may gain Admiſſion into Heaven at the laſt, tho' they neglect the Practice of Virtue and Piety at preſent, may be convinced of the Folly of their Expectations, by the miſerable Cataſtrophe of the five fooliſh Virgins in the Parable; who having too late provided Oil for their Lamps, found the Door of the Bridegroom ſhut againſt them: *And while they went to buy, the Bridegroom came; and they that were ready, went in with him to the Marriage, and the Door was ſhut: And afterwards came alſo the other Virgins, ſaying, Lord, Lord, open to us; but he anſwer'd and ſaid, Verily I ſay unto you, I know you not.* And thus every careleſs and inconſiderate Sinner, who puts off his Preparation to a Death-Bed, will be in like Manner ſhut out from the Kingdom of Heaven. All their Entreaties for Mercy and Admittance will

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be disregarded; and neither their own, nor the Prayers of all the World will save them: But, as they turned a deaf Ear before, to all the Invitations of God's Mercy, and rejected the Counsel of God against themselves, so they shall be cast into outer Darkness, where there shall be Weeping and Gnashing of Teeth for ever. Possibly, this may be thought too severe a Doctrine by some, who would entertain Hopes of the Efficacy of a late Repentance, provided the Person is sincerely penitent. But, supposing the Thing to be possible; yet it is running so great a Risk of our Salvation, it is such a Venture of our Souls, as no wise and prudent Man would chuse to trust to. Let us therefore make the best and speediest Provision we can, for another World; let us continually be trimming our Lamps, and providing Oil, that we may be ready to enter in, with our heavenly Bridegroom.

To have all our Work to do at our last Hours, provided we could do it, hath the Appearance of a careless and slothful Heart; and our doing it then, looks rather an Effect of Force, than a virtuous Choice. And such an Obedience, as it is not a generous one, so its Reward ought to be as low, as its

its Motive was mean; it being founded in the Fear of Punishment, and not in the Amiableness of Virtue. SERM. VIII.

Nay, generally speaking, the Sorrow that Men express at that Time, is not drawn from them, from any Detestation of their Sins, but from the Fear of Punishment, which is hanging over them. Death is then staring them in the Face, surrounded with all those Terrors, that a Mind conscious of its own Guilt, will affright itself with; and the Pleasures of Sin being fled, there is no other Refuge but to fly to Tears, and Resolutions of Amendment. But this is not Repentance; because the Resolution of living better, is not founded on a Detestation of Sin, as it is contrary to the Reason of the Mind, and to the Nature and Purity of God, but upon the Supposition of living no longer; and therefore, as this is an Expedient, only taken up to serve them in their Extremity, we may suppose, that God, who sees the Heart, and knows the Motives Men act upon, and is not to be biassed by any fond Weakness, as we are, will, for all this outward Concern and Sorrow, punish them as unfaithful and wicked Servants.

The

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The Sorrow, I believe, that ſome Men ſhew on their Death-Bed, may have induced many to imagine their Repentance is ſatisfactory; and I don't know, but many ſick Perſons themſelves may have thought ſo too, from that ſeeming Comfort that has ſhone upon their Countenances, after they had performed ſome religious Duty, which, perhaps, they had neglected to do all their Lives before. But let us remember, that the Terms and Condition of Salvation is a virtuous and good Life; and if we are deficient in this, nothing elſe will ever gain us an Admiſſion into the Kingdom of Heaven. But by a good Life, I do not mean a Life exempt from Sin, for ſuch a Life is impoſſible for finite Beings to lead; but a ſincere, conſtant, and honeſt Endeavour to do the Will of God, wherever it is made known to us, and an hearty Abhorrence of every Thing that is diſpleaſing to God: Such a Life may be ſaid to be good, tho' it may ſometimes be enticed by the Deceitfulneſs of Sin; and, thro' God's Grace and Aſſiſtance, which is never wanting to ſuch teachable Diſpoſitions, will riſe again, by Repentance and Amendment of Life, to that State, from whence it firſt fell.

But

But Men who take no Pains to follow the Rules of the Gospel, will be disappointed, if they expect its Rewards. SERM. VIII.

The Design of our Saviour's Coming into the World, was to call Sinners to Repentance, to reclaim Men to a better and more virtuous Course of Life.

The great Design also of his dwelling and conversing with us so long, was to teach us by his Doctrine, in all Holiness and Virtue; and to give us the most perfect Pattern and Example of it, in his Life.

This also was the great End of his Death and Sufferings: *He gave himself for our Sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil World*; that is, that he might rescue us from the vicious Customs and Practices of the World, and turn us from the Ways of Sin and Destruction, into the pleasant Paths of Virtue and everlasting Happiness. *Forasmuch, then, as Christ hath suffered for us in the Flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same Mind; for he that hath suffered in the Flesh, hath ceased from Sin; that he no longer should live the rest of his Time in the Flesh, to the Lusts of Men, but to the Will of God.*

In vain, therefore, do wicked Men place their Hopes of Salvation in the *Merits of Christ*,

Serm. VIII. *Christ*, instead of *obeying his Commandments*: For, he came into the World to procure Pardon for past Sin, for no other Reason, but that he might more effectually prevent it for the future; and there can be no greater Mockery of God and Religion, than to turn that Goodness of God declared in the Gospel, which was intended to lead Men to Repentance, into an Argument for Security in continuing in Sin.

Let us, therefore, immediately resolve to abstain from all Sin, to exercise every Grace and Virtue, and to abound in all the Fruits of Righteousness, which by Jesus Christ are to the Praise and Glory of God; and will, in the End, admit us into those heavenly Mansions, where we shall be for ever happy.

To which blessed Place, that we may at last come, God of his infinite Mercy grant, thro' the Merits and Mediation of his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

SER-

SERMON IX.

On the RESURRECTION.

PART I.

2 TIM. ii. 8.

Remember that Jesus Christ, of the Seed of David, was raised from the Dead, according to my Gospel.

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IN the Beginning of this Chapter, the Apostle calls on his Disciple *Timothy*, (who was himself a Bishop, and a Preacher of the Gospel) to exert his Courage, and to endure Hardness, as a good Soldier of Jesus Christ. The Times, it seems, were very dangerous, and false Doctrines, and cruel Persecutions did abound; insomuch that many of St. *Paul*'s Followers and Companions had forsaken him, when they saw him in Bonds and Imprisonment, and like to suffer Death for the Profession of Christianity: And to this Purpose

SERM. IX. poſe he adviſes him [a] to diſentangle himſelf from the Affairs of this Life, that ſo he might be more expedite and ready to pleaſe him, who had choſen him to be his Soldier, and whoſe Service he had freely undertaken, and hitherto profeſſed; adding, that as a Soldier's Life is attended with many Hardſhips and Hazards, which, notwithſtanding, ſuch Men patiently endure, in Hopes to get the Maſtery, and obtain Rewards; ſo there were ſufficient Encouragements in Chriſtianity, for the Belief and Practice of it, however dangerous; and that he ſhould not fail of thoſe glorious Things it promiſed, if he kept conſtantly in his Mind, and duly remembered this great Truth, which he every where preached, and for which himſelf was now ready to ſuffer Death; that is, That the Perſon known, while he lived on Earth, by the Name of *Jeſus Chriſt*, was, indeed, the promiſed Meſſiah, and of the Seed of *David*; and raiſed from the Dead as certainly as he had conſtantly affirmed and taught it. As if he had ſaid, Although I know very well, that you are inſtructed in the whole Doctrine of the Goſpel, yet I muſt adviſe

[a] 2 *Tim.* ii. 4.

adviſe you to remember, in a moſt particular Manner, this great and important Truth, *viz. That Jeſus Chriſt, of the Seed of David, was raiſed from the Dead.* The Words contain, SERM. IX.

I. A poſitive Aſſertion of the Truth and Reality of our Saviour's Reſurrection.

II. THE Duty of remembering it.

THERE were ſome in the Apoſtle's Time, that denied the Truth of Chriſt's human Nature; that held he was only a Man in Appearance; and, conſequently, as he did not truly die, ſo neither could he be ſaid to be truly raiſed from the Dead. Others, it is likely, not daring to queſtion his Humanity, yet were unwilling to own Jeſus Chriſt to be the true Meſſiah, becauſe they found Fault with his Genealogy and Deſcent. They pretended that he was not of the Seed of *David*, from whom all the Prophets had foretold the *Meſſiah* ſhould proceed; and therefore they would not eaſily believe that he was, indeed, raiſed from the Dead. Againſt both theſe pernicious Errors, which ſap and tear up the very

SERM. IX. very Foundation of the Goſpel, the Apoſtle here arms his Diſciple *Timothy*, aſſuring him, that Jeſus Chriſt was of the Seed of *David*, and, therefore, not to be rejected upon the Account of his Family, which was exactly according to the ancient Prophecies: And beſides, he was raiſed from the Dead, and ſo not only a true and real Man, but by that Miracle ſufficiently declared to be the *Meſſias*, whom the *Jews* expected, and the undoubted Son of God; requiring him to remember theſe Things, and do whatever is implied by this Expreſſion.

IF *Timothy*, who converſed with St. *Paul*, and was aſſured of the Revelations that Apoſtle had, and lived ſo near the Times when theſe Things were done, and were ſtill freſh in the Memory of many, was yet ſo much concerned to remember them, leſt the Fear and Apprehenſions of Perſecution ſhould ſhake his Faith; we, who live at the Diſtance of ſo many Centuries, and can be aſſured of theſe Things only by Report, are no leſs concerned to remember them alſo. Things done ſo long ago are apt to be ſuſpected; and beſides, Security and Sloth are as liable to make as many

many Unbelievers, as Danger does Apoſtates. It highly concerns us, therefore, to be well aſſured of this Doctrine, to examine it with all Impartiality and Care. SERM. IX.

I. Let us, then, inquire into this great and important Article of the Chriſtian Faith, and ſee if there be ſufficient Evidence of the Truth of its Certainty, or no. I will not now inſiſt on the Types and Prophecies of the *Old Teſtament*, which ſerve to prove that Chriſt was to die and riſe again, and that it ought to be ſo; I ſhall now only ſhew that ſo it was.

Now in order to this, I will ſuppoſe, at preſent, that the Writings of the Apoſtles and Evangeliſts are true Hiſtories, that they contain nothing but what was truly ſaid and done, as it is there related. And he that ſhall preſume to queſtion this, may with much more Reaſon call in queſtion the Truth of any Hiſtory whatever; he may as well doubt of every Thing that was done before his own Time, nay, of every Thing that he did not ſee or hear. Suppoſing then the Truth of Scripture Hiſtory, let us examine what Account there is given of our Saviour's Reſurrection, and by

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whom. Now this being a Matter of Fact, and done many Years ago, we have no poſſible Way of coming to the Knowledge and Belief of it, but by the Writings and Teſtimony of thoſe who ſaw it, and did record it. That Matter of Fact then, that has all the Evidence it is capable of, ought to be received as true; and the more unexceptionable the Teſtimony is, the more Reaſon Men have to admit and believe the Fact.

THIS is always allowed as juſt and fair in worldly Proceedings, even in Matters of Life and Death. All Men think it reaſonable to believe a Fact, that is ſubſtantially proved; and no Perſon has Ground, or is allowed to appeal from a Sentence that is paſſed on ſuch Evidence. If then the Reſurrection of our Saviour is ſufficiently atteſted, it has all the Proof and Evidence that the Nature of the Fact will admit, and is as ſtrong an Argument of its Truth, as Sight is of any Thing that is a proper Object of Sight. Who ever queſtions whether there are ſuch Places in the World as *Rome* or *London*, although they never ſaw either of them? And why do they believe there are ſuch Places, but only upon the Teſtimony of thoſe who have

ſeen them, and whom they have no Rea- SERM.
ſon to diſbelieve? So that if any pretend to IX.
queſtion the Truth of this Article, it is not the Weakneſs of the Proofs, but the Power of their Luſts, that makes them diſbelieve: For there are not many Things in the World, which yet are moſt firmly believed, that ever had, or, perhaps, are capable of having, half that Evidence that Chriſt's Reſurrection hath. For to make a Teſtimony in the higheſt Manner credible, and fit to be received, it is neceſſary,

1*ſt*, THAT the Perſons who depoſe and give their Evidence, ſhould be certainly informed of what they ſay.

2*dly*, IT ſtill makes the Teſtimony fitter to be received, if there are a good Number of Witneſſes: For in Matters of great Conſequence, no Man's ſingle Word, of what Authority or Credit ſoever he may be, is thought ſufficient to depend on.

3*dly*, THESE Witneſſes are yet more credible, if there appears no ſufficient Reaſon to queſtion their Integrity and Honeſty: And this cannot be, if,

4*thly*, THEY do not appear to be ſwayed by any vicious or worldly Motive; if neither Envy, nor Revenge, nor the Proſpect of

SERM. IX. Advantage, or Hopes of Honour, can be objected to them.

5thly, IT raiſes the Reputation and Credibility of any Witneſs, if he gives all the Security he can for the Truth of what he ſays. And,

6thly, IT does more ſo, if he gives ſome preſent and ſufficient Token and Sign of the Truth of his Depoſitions.

WHERE all theſe Circumſtances meet in any Teſtimony, that Teſtimony deſerves the greateſt Credit, and the moſt firm Aſſent that any Teſtimony can do. It remains now to ſhew the full Concurrence of all theſe in the Teſtimony given to our Saviour's Reſurrection. As to the

FIRST, That the Perſons who depoſe and give their Evidence, ſhould be certainly informed of what they ſay; what greater Information can be had, than that of Seeing, Hearing, and Feeling? The Apoſtles profeſs they ſaw him often, converſed, eat, and drank with him; heard him diſcourſe frequently during the Space of forty Days: So that St. *Luke* had good Reaſon to affirm [a], that Chriſt ſhewed himſelf alive after his Paſſion, by many infallible

[a] *Acts* i. 3.

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lible Proofs. It is the Height of an extravagant Obſtinacy, to pretend the Apoſtles were under a *Deluſion* all this While; that they were carried into this Belief by the Strength of their own Imagination, or only ſaw an Apparition in their Fancies. For if ſo many Perſons, endued with Senſe and Underſtanding, could be thus deceived for forty Days together, there is then an End, not only of all *Teſtimony*, but of all *Certainty* whatever, even that of the *Senſes*. For if the Apoſtles could be miſtaken in this Manner, how can a ſingle Perſon be ſure of any Thing? Why may not he as well doubt of what he ſees and hears? Much more may he queſtion what has been ſeen or heard by others. Could St. *Thomas* only fancy that he ſaw the Wound in Chriſt's Side, and the Print of the Nails that pierced his Hands, when there was really no ſuch Thing? Could the Apoſtles dream, that they eat and drank with him? It is very unuſual for twelve Men to dream exactly in the ſame Manner. Beſides, it is to be obſerved, which adds great Weight to the Teſtimony, that the Apoſtles were not over-credulous, nor eaſy to believe in this Matter: They would not believe the Re-

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port of the Women who had ſeen him, but their Words ſeemed to them as idle Tales; inſomuch that our Saviour had Reaſon to blame them for their Backwardneſs in believing thoſe who had ſeen him. But the Want of Faith in them at firſt, ought to ſtrengthen ours for ever after; eſpecially when we conſider, that we rely on the Teſtimony of Men that were not eaſy to entertain every Story that was told them, but would be ſatisfied, and carefully examine the Truth of what they believed themſelves, and were to convey to others. If we further conſider, how many ſeveral Times our Saviour appeared, there will not be the leaſt Shadow of a Pretence for any Deluſion or Miſtake in the Caſe. I will but juſt mention them, and in that Order wherein they were made: On the Day of his Reſurrection he firſt appeared to *Mary Magdalene*, very early [a]; then to other Women, the Mother of *James* and *Joſes*, to *Johanna*, *Salome*, and thoſe who followed him out of *Galilee* [b]; then to the two Diſciples going to *Emmaus* [c]; then to *Simon Peter* by him-

[a] *Mark* xvi. 9. [b] *Luke* xxiv. 10. [c] Ver. 15.

himſelf [a]; then to all the Apoſtles together [b]; then to St. *Thomas*, with the reſt, eight Days after his Reſurrection [c]; then to ſeven Diſciples, at the Sea of *Tiberias* [d]. St. *John* ſays, indeed [e], that this was the third Time Chriſt appeared to his Diſciples; but this muſt be meant of his appearing to a great many of them at once, not to one or two by themſelves; and here he diſcovered himſelf to them by the Miracle of the Fiſhes, and by talking with *Peter*. He appeared alſo to the eleven Diſciples in a Mountain of *Galilee* [f]; and it is likely, that in this Place was the Appearance he made to five hundred Brethren at once, which St. *Paul* ſpeaks of [g]: For ſince Chriſt had appointed the Place, and, perhaps, the Time, no doubt but Abundance of Diſciples, who deſired to ſee him, went thither. Then he appeared to St. *James* alone, as St. *Paul* hints [h]; and to all his Diſciples together on the Day of his Aſcenſion, both at *Jeruſalem* and *Bethany*. Theſe ſeveral Appearances are expreſsly mentioned in the Holy Scriptures, abun-

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[a] *Luke* xxiv. 34. [b] Ver. 36. [c] *John* xx. 26.
[d] *John* xxi. 1, 2. [e] Ver. 14. [f] *Mat.* xxviii. 16.
[g] 1 *Cor.* xv. 6. [h] 1 *Cor.* xv. 7.

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dantly ſufficient to ſatisfy the Apoſtles themſelves, and any *reaſonable* Man, that the Lord was riſen indeed. And there is no Queſtion, but he appeared much oftner, tho' not mentioned, ſince he continued forty Days after his Reſurrection on the Earth; which he did, not only to aſſure the Apoſtles of the Truth of the Reſurrection, but the more fully to inſtruct them in the Things belonging to the Kingdom of God, than he had yet done. And this St. *Luke* tells us he did, during theſe forty Days[a]. And this brings me to the

SECOND Head, *viz.* to conſider the Number of theſe Witneſſes. For it is manifeſt from this Account of Chriſt's Appearing, that although the eleven Apoſtles were the *chief*, yet, they were not the *only* Witneſſes of the Reſurrection: For we read, that he appeared to five hundred at once, and to all the Diſciples together at his Aſcenſion. It is not improbable, but that there were ſome Thouſands that ſaw him after he was riſen; among all whom, we find the moſt exact Harmony and Agreement, both in the Matter and Circumſtances of what they related; which muſt have been impoſſible, had it not been true. For, how could ſo many have

[a] *Acts* i. 3.

have ſo punctually agreed in the ſame Story, had it been a Lye? Eſpecially, when they were ſo narrowly ſifted, ſo craftily examined, and croſs-queſtioned, as doubtleſs they were, by the *Jewiſh* Magiſtrates, who were profeſſed Enemies to this Doctrine, and were concerned in Honour, Intereſt, and Conſcience to have diſcovered the Impoſture, if it had been one. What! Was not one to be found of all this great Number, ſo honeſt, as to confeſs the Truth? Or ſo fearful, as to be brought to deny it upon the Threatning of Puniſhments? And, that no ſuch Thing happened is evident, by the Credit that their Teſtimony found among thoſe, who had the beſt Opportunities to examine the Truth of it, the *Jews* themſelves, who would be ſure to try all Ways to diſprove it; or, if they did not, no other Reaſon can be given, but, becauſe they durſt not. They knew it was too true to be denied, and too well atteſted to be called in queſtion. Had it not been ſo, it would have been an eaſy Matter for their Enemies to have trapped them in their Story; it being impoſſible, that among ſo great a Number of Deceivers, had they been ſo, there ſhould be always an exact Harmony and Agreement. But, it

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SERM. IX. it may be aſked, Why did not Chriſt appear to *Herod*, *Pontius Pilate*, and the chief of the *Jews*, who crucified him? Why not to the Sanhedrim at *Jeruſalem*? This would have put his Reſurrection beyond all Doubt, and made it more illuſtrious, and the World would have more readily believed it. Why only to his Diſciples and Followers? But it is not for Men to preſcribe to God what is proper to be done: It is unreaſonable, and wicked too. His Crucifiers had no Reaſon to expect ſo great a Favour: They who would not be perſuaded by all his Miracles he had done before, but hated him, and perſecuted him to Death, were certainly unworthy to behold the Glory of his Reſurrection. It is not ſuitable to the Wiſdom of God, to force Men to believe, as this Way muſt have done: For, that he appeared to his Diſciples and Followers, was not to bring them to believe; but to ſtrengthen and increaſe the Faith they had before. However, God did not leave the *Jews* without ſufficient Reaſon to convince them, nor throw off all Care of their Salvation; ſince the Miracles, which the Apoſtles wrought by the Power, and in the Name of Chriſt, were a Demonſtration,

ſtration, that Chriſt himſelf was alive; ſince a dead Man can neither work Miracles himſelf, nor beſtow that Power on others. Theſe Miracles were, to the *Jews*, as undoubted Proofs of Chriſt's Reſurrection, as if they had ſeen and handled him themſelves, after he was riſen from the Dead. Nor can any ſuſpect the Apoſtles Teſtimony of Chriſt, becauſe they were his Friends and Followers; for they were ſo, only, becauſe they were convinced, that he came from God, and was a Teacher of Truth and Righteouſneſs. Had they found him otherwiſe, and that he had deceived them, their Love would have been turned into fierce Indignation. But they were not deceived, nor were themſelves Deceivers: Which was the SERM. IX.

THIRD Particular, to prove their Teſtimony highly credible, *viz.* There is no imaginable Reaſon to ſuſpect their Honeſty and Integrity.

AND this alſo we have to ſtrengthen the Teſtimony of our Saviour's Reſurrection: For, if we reflect on the Nature of their Doctrine, the Manners of their Followers, the Way of their Teſtimony, and the Succeſs it found among thoſe, who beſt knew them,

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them, we ſhall ſee all the Reaſon in the World to take them for very honeſt and ſincere Perſons. Their Doctrine plainly condemns all Lying, Diſſimulation, and Hypocriſy; and commands Plainneſs and Simplicity, as an indiſpenſable Duty. So that, if they believed their own Doctrine, they could not but know themſelves to be ſelf-condemned, if what they teſtified was falſe. But, ſuppoſe they did not believe it, why then ſhould they declaim ſo much againſt Diſhoneſty, which was nothing elſe, but to expoſe their own Infamy to the World, if they were viſibly diſhoneſt themſelves? But, what the Temper of the Maſters was, we may learn from that of their Followers and Diſciples, whoſe known and peculiar Character it was, to be plain and open, ingenuous and ſincere in all their Words and Actions: They thought it a Diſparagement to be put upon their Oaths, thinking it ſufficient, for every good Man to give this Aſſurance of his Truth, *I ſpeak truly*. Inſomuch, that one of the *Roman* Officers, who was employed to enquire into their Behaviour, could give the Emperor no other Account than this, although he made uſe of Violence to bring them to Confeſſion, That all their Fault

was,

was, that they uſed to meet to worſhip Chriſt, and there bind themſelves by a Sacrament, not to do any Wickedneſs; not to ſteal, rob, nor commit Adultery, nor with-hold any Thing that was entruſted with them, when juſtly demanded. SERM. IX.

IF the Diſciples were ſo honeſt, no doubt but their Maſters taught them ſo, by Example, as well as Precept. Had they been otherwiſe, ſome of their Diſciples, who were continually about them, muſt have known it; and then they would either have renounced them, or been like them. But, that they were honeſt, is confirmed by the Manner of their Teſtimony, which was with all Plainneſs and Simplicity of Speaking, with the greateſt Freedom and Aſſurance of Spirit: They ſpoke boldly in the Synagogue, and before the Sanhedrim, not like Men, that were guilty of a Cheat, and were to guard againſt Diſcoveries. They did not whiſper this Report in Corners, but with the greateſt Confidence publiſhed it in the Midſt of *Jeruſalem*; and were very particular in relating the Circumſtances of it, nor ever varied or recanted, any of them, upon the moſt different Examinations: And, hence, they found ſuch Credit among thoſe, who were beſt able

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to ſatisfy themſelves of their Honeſty. For, had they not been Men of known Integrity, how could they have gained ſo much Credit, in a Place where they were ſo well known, and among Perſons with whom they converſed with the greateſt Openneſs and Freedom every Day? How could they have brought over ſo many *Jews* to this Belief, who were obliged, in their own Vindication, to diſprove the Report, if they could? Since, if it was true, it proved them guilty of the moſt monſtrous Impiety that ever was, *viz. the Murder of Jeſus Chriſt:* And it is likely, that the Murderers of our Saviour would never have believed the Story of his Reſurrection, ſo clear an Evidence of his Innocence and their Guilt, if they could have found any juſt Cauſe to queſtion the Veracity of the Apoſtles. And yet, in ſpite of all Reluctance to the contrary, great Numbers of them found themſelves obliged to believe it, although with a deep Senſe of their *horrid Impiety*, which forced them to cry out, *Men and Brethren, what ſhall we do to be ſaved?* Now, ſuppoſing them to be honeſt and ſincere Men, their Teſtimony muſt be true, becauſe it was not *Matter of Opinion*, in which it is poſſible for the Wiſeſt

to

to be miſtaken; but *Matter of Fact*, of which they were aſſured by their own Senſes. But this will receive a greater Confirmation, if we conſider, SERM. IX.

FOURTHLY, That the Apoſtles do not appear to have been ſwayed, in giving this Teſtimony, by any bad, or worldly Conſideration, which, we know, puts many Men on bad and deſperate Attempts. Neither Envy, nor Revenge; the Purſuit of Pleaſure, the Proſpect of Advantage, nor Hopes of Honour, can with any Colour of Reaſon be objected to them. Men do not venture on bold and hazardous Actions, without ſome or other of theſe Motives to induce them. In the Apoſtles, it could be nothing elſe but the Conviction of the Truth, and the Diſcharge of their Conſciences, that could move them to teſtify our Saviour's Reſurrection. For, firſt, it is evident they had no private Quarrels to purſue; they were not conſiderable enough to have many Enemies upon any perſonal or worldly Motives: And as to any Advantage of Profit or Pleaſure, there was not the leaſt Shadow of Hope, for them to expect it *here* or *hereafter*. Not *here*, for they were told before-hand by our Saviour, that Perſecutions would be their

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their Portion. And indeed, if they had any Senſe or Foreſight at all, they could not but expect it. To preach the Reſurrection of Chriſt to the *Jews*, who had crucified him, muſt needs alarm the High-Prieſt, and Rulers, and make them bend all their Forces to oppoſe, and confound that Doctrine. The *Gentiles*, who knew little of the Matter, and had a Religion quite of another Nature, would be apt to entertain it with Contempt, or ſomething worſe; as we know they did. Now, there could be little Temptation for the Apoſtles, in ſuch Circumſtances, to preach the Reſurrection, which would certainly ſet the World againſt them. As for the Hopes of Honour, or being the Founders of a Sect; the Poverty of their Condition, their Way of Life and Education, was hardly capable of ſuch towering Imaginations; their Souls were not turned for ſuch great Deſigns: Or, if they had been, what Succeſs could they promiſe to themſelves? How could they hope to bring the World, or any conſiderable Part of it to conſent to, and perſevere in their Doctrine, and ſo lay a good Foundation for their future Honour and Renown? They could have no Aſſiſtance from their Maſter, whom

whom they muſt ſtill know to be among the Dead, and ſo incapable of helping them. They could hope for none from God, whom they groſly belied, if their Teſtimony was falſe: Nor from any Wealth, Power, Learning, or Subtilty of their own; for they had none of them: Nor from any lucky Conjunction and Concurrence of Affairs; for there was not the leaſt Appearance of a Readineſs or Inclination, in *Jew* or *Gentile*, to receive this Doctrine. Nay, they ſoon found the contrary, by ſenſible and dear Experience. So that, if their Doctrine was not true, but only their Contrivance, and their own impudent Aſſertion; they ventured on it, againſt all the Oppoſition of the World, in Defiance of the greateſt Miſeries and Calamities, and without the leaſt tolerable Motive to ſuſtain their Courage, or animate their Hopes, under theſe Diſtreſſes and Diſcouragements. An Inſtance of ſuch Stupidity, or deſperate Reſolution, that no Hiſtory in the World can equal!

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BUT, perhaps, the Hopes of Heaven and eternal Happineſs might make Amends for theſe Defects, and be of Force ſufficient to ſupport them under all their Troubles and

SERM. IX. Afflictions. And ſo, indeed, they are, whenever they are well grounded. But, it were ſtill worſe, and more extravagant in the Apoſtles to expect a Reward in Heaven for belying God, and abuſing Mankind on Earth; as moſt certainly they did, if Chriſt be not riſen from the Dead. Take them either as *Jews* or Chriſtians, they could not but believe a God; they knew, that the Law of *Moſes* forbad Lying; and Chriſtianity much more. So that they could hope for no Reward from God, for doing that, which his Law forbad, and which themſelves condemned. Since, therefore, if their Teſtimony was falſe, they could reap no Advantage from it, and could have no Encouragement from this World, or the next, they muſt be ſuppoſed to be well aſſured of what they ſaid, and to witneſs nothing but the Truth; ſince no Number of Men were ever heard of in the World to be ſo extravagant, as to invent a known Lie, for no other End, but to *die* for it here, and be eternally miſerable hereafter.

SINCE, therefore, we have ſuch good Reaſons to believe the Reſurrection of our Saviour, and that our own is conſequent

upon that; *for as by Man came Death, by Man came also the Resurrection of the Dead; Let us set our Affections on Things above, and follow Holiness, without which no Man shall see the Lord.*

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SERMON X.

On the RESURRECTION.

PART II.

2 TIM. ii. 8.

Remember that Jeſus Chriſt, of the Seed of David, was raiſed from the Dead, according to my Goſpel.

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THE laſt Circumſtance I conſidered, to prove the Teſtimony of the Apoſtles highly credible, was grounded on their not appearing to have been ſwayed in giving this Teſtimony by any bad or worldly Conſiderations. I proceed now to the

FIFTH Conſideration, or Circumſtance requiſite to give a Teſtimony the greateſt Credibility; and that is, That a Man gives ſome preſent, and ſufficient Security for the Truth of what he ſays. Hence it is required, with very good Reaſon, that in worldly Matters

Men give their Oaths for the Confirmation of what they teſtify: But the Witneſſes of our Saviour's Reſurrection did more: They endured all Sorts of Diſtreſſes and Afflictions, and, at laſt, ſealed the Truth of this Report with their Blood; and that not in an eaſy Way, but with the moſt exquiſite Torments that the Malice of their Adverſaries could invent, or their Power inflict. There was but one of all the Apoſtles, namely, St. *John*, that eſcaped a violent Death; and great Numbers of others of all Ages and Sexes underwent the ſame Fate, in Defence of the ſame Cauſe. Now, who can imagine, that ſo many Perſons ſhould be ſo careleſs of all the Comforts of this World, and ſo willingly expoſe themſelves to certain Death, for the Maintenance of what they knew to be a Cheat? It is certain, many have died couragiouſly enough for falſe Tenets and Opinions, but then they believed them to be true. But no Inſtance in the World can be given of ſo many Perſons, of all Ages, Ranks, and Conditions, that have ſo undauntedly ſuffered Death for what they knew to be falſe; as theſe Witneſſes of the Reſurrection did, who reported not what they only believed,

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SERM. X. but what they knew to be true, upon the most certain Information and Evidence of Senſe. So that if Chriſt did not riſe, as they declared, they died in Defence of a *known Lie:* Which is ſuch a Piece of Folly, as exceeds all Examples of Extravagance that ever were. There never was an Inſtance of this Nature among Men, and I may venture to ſay, there never will be, ſo long as Men love themſelves; and to imagine this of the Apoſtles, and the other Witneſſes of our Saviour's Reſurrection, only argues that Men have more *Inclination* than *Reaſon* to call in queſtion their Report.

THE *Sixth*, and laſt Circumſtance is, That the Witneſſes give ſome certain Sign and Token, that what they ſay is true. And this they did ſufficiently by the many Miracles they wrought in his Name and by his Power, as themſelves profeſſed, whom they teſtified to be riſen from the Dead. Thus we read, That *they went forth and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the Word with Signs following; and with great Power*, (that is, the Power of Miracles,) *gave Witneſs of the Reſurrection of the Lord Jeſus:*

And

And at *Iconium*, *the Lord gave Teſtimony to the Word of his Grace, and granted Signs and Wonders to be done by their Hands*[a]. The ſame was done by St. *Stephen* at *Jeruſalem*[b]; by St. *Philip* at *Samaria*[c]; and by St. *Paul* at *Epheſus*[d]: Which Things being recorded in an Age, wherein, if they had been falſe, they might have been eaſily diſproved, it had been the maddeſt Project in the World for the Apoſtles to pretend to, had it not been true. The World was prejudiced againſt them, and would be ſure to have a watchful Eye upon them; and had they ever been found falſe in this Pretence of Miracles, the whole World would ſoon have rung of it; which would have done their Cauſe more Hurt, than all the Miracles they pretended to could advance it. But theſe Matters of Fact were ſo certain, that the Heathens themſelves could not deny them. They had no Way to avoid the Conſequence of them, but by pretending, that the Apoſtles, and other Chriſtians, did them by Art Magick, and the Power of evil Spirits; which was very likely, that they who drove out theſe

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[a] *Acts* xiv. 3. [b] *Acts* vi. 8. [c] *Acts* viii. 6, 7.
[d] *Acts* xix. 11.

SERM. X. evil Spirits from Mens Bodies, ſhould owe that Power to theſe Dæmons; that they ſhould be aſſiſted by *Satan* to overthrow his own Kingdom. It is then undeniable, that theſe Things were done not by Magick, but by the Power of Chriſt; and if it had not been ſo, the God of Truth would never have impowered them to impoſe ſuch a Cheat upon the World. Theſe Miracles then were plain Proofs of the Truth of what they did atteſt concerning Chriſt's Reſurrection: They were as ſo many Divine Seals, by which God himſelf did confirm their Teſtimony, whoſe Truth and Goodneſs would not ſuffer him to ſet the Seal of his miraculous Power to a Lie. And beſides, they were ſo many evident Demonſtrations that Chriſt was riſen and alive, ſince they did them all in his Name, and by a Power derived from him. For how is it poſſible, that Chriſt ſhould give them ſuch a Power, which himſelf had not, if he was ſtill among the Dead? So that by the Miracles which the Apoſtles wrought in the Name, and by the Power of Chriſt, they did, in Effect, thus beſpeak the World: Look here, O unbelieving World, if nothing elſe will perſuade you that Chriſt, whom

whom we preach, is riſen from the Dead, behold the vital Operations, theſe evident Signs of Life, which he manifeſts in us his Diſciples; who, though in ourſelves as unable to do ſuch Things as you, yet no ſooner do we call upon the Name, and invoke the Aid of our Great Maſter, but we are preſently enabled to perform mighty Things, beyond the Power of any Creature; and without any other Charm but this powerful Name, we raiſe the Dead, caſt out Devils, give Sight to the Blind, Feet to the Lame, and cure all Manner of Diſeaſes. And is not this as plain a Proof of his being alive, as if he were now ſtanding before you? If he was dead, he could not act in us as you ſee him do; and, therefore, if nothing elſe will convince you that he is ſtill alive, behold theſe mighty Powers which he ſheweth in us, and be at length perſuaded by theſe ſenſible Tokens of his Activity, which we produce before your Eyes, that he is riſen from the Dead! For we are to obſerve, that this Power of working Miracles was not ſo fully communicated to the Apoſtles till after Chriſt's Aſcenſion into Heaven: For before he aſcended, we read, that he commanded them SERM. X.

to

SERM. X. to tarry at *Jeruſalem* till they had received the Gift of the Holy Ghoſt; or, which is the ſame Thing, the more plentiful Power of working Miracles. And this Gift, as he himſelf tells them, was on Purpoſe to enable them to bear Teſtimony of him unto all the World. For he being now aſcended into Heaven, they could no longer produce his Perſon to convince Unbelievers of the Truth of his Reſurrection; and, therefore, to make Amends for this Defect, Chriſt gave them the Power of working Miracles, that that might compenſate for the Loſs of his bodily Preſence: A plain Indication this, of his being reſtored to Life again. And, indeed, this was as certain a Sign of it, as if he had continued upon Earth, and openly converſed among Men, in the View of the World: For Chriſt did not more viſibly act in his own Perſon, when he was upon Earth, than he did in the Perſons of the Apoſtles, after he aſcended into Heaven.

THUS, in ſhort, is the Evidence of the Reſurrection plain and convincing.

THE Apoſtles and other Diſciples had the Information of their Senſes, the moſt certain Evidence that can be. They were

not

not hasty to believe it, but took Care to view the Place, and would not receive the Report of others till they themselves had seen him. It is impossible they should be under a Delusion for so long a Time as forty Days, and after ten several Appearances; and the more so, as their Number was considerable: Nor could such a Number of Men have agreed long in the same Story, since they had so many Enemies to watch them, who had both Inclination and Opportunity enough to have discovered the Imposture, if they could. But that the Apostles were honest Men, and spoke Truth, appears from their Doctrine; from their own and Disciples Lives and Conversations, which were exactly conformable to their Doctrine; from that Assurance and undaunted Spirit, wherewith they delivered their Testimony; and from the Success it found among the *Jews* and *Gentiles*, who were, by the very Genius of their Religions, Enemies to Christianity, and would never have received it, but upon the strongest Evidence imaginable. And this they were the more confirmed in, because the Apostles were not induced by any worldly Motives; they had no ill Passions to gratify, nor

SERM. X. nor Intereſt to perſuade; they could hope for no Honour, nor propoſe any Pleaſure; they could not but foreſee, that they ſhould ſuffer for this Report, and accordingly found it. They had nothing to ſupport their Spirits but the Goodneſs of their Cauſe, which, if they knew was falſe, they could not but know, that both Heaven and Earth were againſt them, and that they would be miſerable in this World and the next. But it was far otherwiſe with them; they counted theſe Sufferings their Joy and their Crown, knowing for *whom*, and for what *Cauſe* they ſuffered; and that Chriſt was indeed riſen from the Dead, as plainly appeared by the Deſcent of the Holy Ghoſt upon them.

UPON the Whole, it may be truly affirmed, that, from the Beginning of the World to this Day, never was any Matter of Fact more ſufficiently and credibly teſtified than this of the Reſurrection of our Saviour. But although this was never ſo true in itſelf, it may be ſaid, perhaps, what is it to us? Why are the World in general, and Chriſtians in particular, more concerned in Jeſus of *Nazareth*'s Reſurrection than that of any other Man? There

was

was one, we know, in the *Old Teſtament*, raiſed from Death to Life by touching *Eliſha*'s Bones; and we read of ſeveral in the *New Teſtament* brought to Life again, and yet no great Matter made of it. Why then does St. *Paul* call upon *Timothy* with ſo much Earneſtneſs to remember, *That Jeſus Chriſt, of the Seed of David, was raiſed from the Dead, according to* his *Goſpel*? Now the Anſwer to this brings me to the ſecond Head of the Text, *viz.* SERM. X.

II. The Duty of remembering it; which will contain the practical Application of this great and important Doctrine.

HAVING gone through the Arguments that prove the Truth of our Saviour's Reſurrection, from the Teſtimony given by the Apoſtles and others, I proceed, therefore, to the practical Uſe of it. And,

1*ſt*, The Truth of this ſingle Article is a full and ſufficient Proof, that Jeſus was the true Meſſiah. For although his Miracles ſerve to ſhew the Divinity of his Doctrine, yet this of his Reſurrection was that which he chiefly appealed to, and was, indeed, the greateſt Confirmation of his Doctrine. Thus, when he had performed

that

SERM. X. that Act of Zeal, in whipping the Money-Changers out of the Temple, and the *Jews* required ſome Sign of him, to ſhew by what Authority he did it; he bade them *deſtroy this Temple*, pointing, no Doubt, to his own Body, *and in three Days I will raiſe it up again*, ſaith he.

2*dly*, WE are aſſured, by this, of our Juſtification: *And, if we believe on him, that raiſed Jeſus Chriſt from the Dead*, it will be imputed to us for Righteouſneſs; *for he was delivered for our Offences, and raiſed again for our Juſtification.* By his Death we know he ſuffered for Sin; by his Reſurrection, we are aſſured, that he ſuffered not for his own. Had Man never ſinned, Chriſt had not died; and had he himſelf been a Sinner, he had not riſen again. By dying for thoſe Sins, which Man had committed, he roſe again to ſhew that he had made a full, perfect, and ſufficient Satisfaction for their Sins. So that we, by believing in him, may obtain the Remiſſion of our Sins, and the Juſtification of our Perſons; for, *God ſending his Son in the Likeneſs of ſinful Fleſh, condemned Sin in the Fleſh*; and raiſing up our Surety from the Grave, did actually abſolve and quit him from the Obligation,

ligation, to which he had bound himſelf; and in diſcharging him, acknowledged full Satisfaction made for us. But, SERM. X.

3*dly*, THE Reſurrection of Chriſt is a certain Proof of the Truth of our own Reſurrection; the great Aſſurance, and Comfort of true Chriſtians. For, *The God and Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, according to his abundant Mercy, hath begotten us to a lively Hope, by the Reſurrection of Chriſt from the Dead; to an Inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled*[a]. By the Reſurrection of Chriſt, God the Father is ſaid to have begotten him; and therefore, by the ſame he hath begotten us, who are called *Brethren*, and *Coheirs with Chriſt*. *For if, when we were Enemies, we were reconciled to God by the Death of his Son, much more being reconciled, we ſhall be ſaved by his Life.* Thus, from the Reſurrection of Chriſt, the Apoſtle proves the general Reſurrection[b]; and ſays[c], that God hath *appointed a Day, wherein he will judge the World in Righteouſneſs, by that Man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given Aſſurance unto all Men, in that he hath raiſed him from the Dead.* And St. *Peter* ſays, *Therefore*, (that is,

[a] 1 *Pet.* i. 3. [b] 1 *Cor.* xv. [c] *Acts* xvii. 31.

SERM. X. is, becauſe God hath raiſed him from the Dead,) *let all the Houſe of Iſrael know, that God hath made this ſame Jeſus both Lord and Chriſt*[a]. By this, then, God hath given all the Strength and Aſſurance to our Belief of the Reſurrection, that can be deſired. By this, as a moſt ſenſible Proof, againſt all the Objections of our feeble Reaſon, he hath ſhewed himſelf able, and given us a *certain Pledge*, that he is willing to raiſe us from the Dead: For we are Members of that Body, whereof Chriſt is the Head; and if the Head be riſen, the Members cannot be far behind. He is the Firſt-born from the Dead, and we Sons of the Reſurrection: The Spirit of Chriſt abiding in us, maketh us Members of Chriſt; and by the ſame Spirit, we have a full Right and Title to riſe with Chriſt our Head. But,

4*thly*, IF it be certain, from Chriſt's Reſurrection, that we ſhall riſe, there is no Doubt, but this will be to Judgment; to give an Account of our Profeſſion; how we have behaved ourſelves, ſince we have entertained this Belief; whether we have remembered theſe Things as we ought to do. The Word is of large extent, and takes in the

[a] *Acts* ii. 36.

the whole Duty of a Chriſtian, *Knowledge*, *Faith*, *Obedience*, *Love*, *Sincerity*, *Meditation*, and *Prayer*: All this is comprehended in *Remembering*. A Man's *Creed* may, no Doubt, tell him, that there is a God, and that he is Almighty; but, if it goes no farther; if it does not work upon his Reaſon; if he does not infer from hence, the Neceſſity of *fearing* and *obeying* him, who is all-powerful to puniſh his Tranſgreſſions; he may repeat the Article every Day, and yet live without God in the World. In like Manner, he may go on to the Birth Death, and Reſurrection of our Saviour; but, if he conſiders not the Obligations to Gratitude and Duty, which ariſe from hence, he may remember his Birth, and yet never be regenerate; his Death, yet not die unto Sin; his Reſurrection, yet lie corrupting in Senſuality, and not riſe to Newneſs of Life. So alſo, he may proceed to Chriſt's coming to judge the Quick and the Dead; but, if he reflects not on his own particular Concern in it; if he conſiders not, that God, for every ſecret Thing, will bring him, as well as others, to Judgment; he may talk of this great Judgment, as Men do of Aſſizes, where they have no Concern or Trial;

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but it will never ſo affect him, as to prevent his Condemnation, or make him ſo judge himſelf, that he be not judged of the Lord. And ſo it is with any other Part of the chriſtian Faith; if we do not draw from thence its proper and juſt Inference, we ſhall never feel its Efficacy, or be the better for it. This ſingle Doctrine of the Reſurrection, hath in itſelf ſufficient Remedies for all our ſpiritual Evils. But then we muſt reflect, that it is, like other Phyſick, a *Medicine* not a *Charm*; it muſt be *taken*, and *not laid by us*; and if we fail to apply it right, we ſhall miſs of the Cure. If Men do not, by ſober Conſideration, draw out the Virtue, which ſhould heal them, from this Doctrine; they repeat their Creed to no Purpoſe, and remember it in vain. When the Apoſtle, therefore, calls upon *Timothy* to *remember, that Jeſus Chriſt, of the Seed of David, was raiſed from the Dead*, his Meaning is, that he ſhould frequently and ſeriouſly conſider it, give it due Attention, and always have it in his View; that no Multiplicity of Buſineſs, and Hurry of Affairs, ſhould drive it from his Thoughts. But, perhaps, it may be ſaid, that *Timothy* had little elſe to do, that it was his Buſineſs and Profeſſion to conſider and

preach theſe Things; but how ſhould they, who get their Subſiſtence by the Sweat of their Brows, who daily labour for their Bread, how ſhould ſuch Perſons find Time and Leiſure for theſe ſpiritual Meditations? How ſhould they be able to entertain their Thoughts with the Contemplation of the Reſurrection, and another Life, who are ſcarce able to provide for this? But to this it is eaſy to anſwer, that no Man is, or can be, ſo employed in the Affairs of this World, but he may find Opportunities enough, and Invitations too, to think upon this Doctrine: And it is certain, that no Time is better employed, than that which is ſpent in meditating on the Reſurrection. Every Space of Twenty-four Hours may bring it to our *Remembrance*, in which there is always a *Revolution*, amounting to a *Reſurrection*. The Day is buried in Night, Silence, and Darkneſs; on the Morning it riſes again, and ſhines with new Luſtre. Who is not ſenſible of this? Who want Time or Ability to improve this *daily Reſurrection*, to the Meditation of their own? As the Day dies into Night; ſo does Summer into Winter, and revives in Spring: The Graſs, the Trees, the Flowers of all Kinds, and Beauties, riſe SERM. X.

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from their State of Death, and grow, and flouriſh again; and, if we are not quite ſtupid, may inſtruct us what we ought to expect. The Corn, we ſow in the Earth, that it may increaſe for our Nouriſhment and Food, is a lively Reſemblance of the Death of our Bodies, and their Reſurrection to another State. Thus, all Things are repaired by corrupting, are preſerved by periſhing, and revive by dying. Theſe Things we moſt frequently converſe with; we behold their Changes, and may eaſily apply them to our own Condition; may draw that Advantage from them, as may make Amends for any Loſs we ſuffer in them, and be greater Gainers, by ſuch an Uſe of them, than any other.

THIS is the firſt Thing implied in the Expreſſion of *Remembering*; that this Doctrine ſhould be the frequent Subject of our Meditations; for which no Man can pretend to want ſufficient Leiſure, ſince it may be done amidſt his daily Labour, and ſince he has, in that, ſo many Opportunities to bring it to his Thoughts. This muſt firſt be done, ſince without it, the moſt certain and important Truth can have no Power, or Effect upon us. The Doctrine

of the Reſurrection of Chriſt, and our own, is full fraught with invincible Arguments; but ſtill, they are but Arguments; they muſt firſt obtain Attention, before they can gain Aſſent; they will infallibly weigh down the Scales, though all the Terrors and Pleaſures of the World were ſet againſt them. But then, they muſt be put into thoſe Scales, and be held by an even Hand; that is, they muſt be entertained with ſo much Deliberation, as may ſerve to try and examine their Weight. They are addreſſed to us as Men, that is, reaſonable and conſidering Creatures: But, if we make no Uſe of theſe Faculties, thoſe Arguments can never work upon us: If we do, they will certainly prevail; and be of Force ſufficient, to make us conformable in all Things to Chriſt our Head, as in dying to Sin, ſo alſo in riſing again to Newneſs of Life: Which was the SERM. X.

SECOND Thing implied in this Expreſſion of *remembering, that Jeſus Chriſt, of the Seed of David, was raiſed from the Dead.* As if he had ſaid, If you remember this as you ought to do, you can never want a Guard againſt Temptations, or a Spur to Virtue. The Times were

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then exceeding dangerous; and Chriſtianity was violently and openly oppoſed by all the Power of both *Jew* and *Gentile*; it was almoſt Death to own Chriſt's Reſurrection; and yet, the Apoſtle thought a due Reflection on this Doctrine, was enough to furniſh *Timothy* with undaunted Courage, and to ſupport him againſt all the Terrors of the World. That Chriſt is riſen from the Dead, and that we ſhall riſe alſo, is a Truth, capable (when firmly believed and ſeriouſly weighed) of animating the moſt fearful Tempers; it will infuſe ſuch Vigour into the Soul, as none can have, but they that are alike diſpoſed and warmed with ſuch Reflections.

THE greateſt of all ſublunary Terrors is Death; whence he is beautifully called *the King of Terrors:* The Fear whereof is ſo troubleſome, and, yet, the Thoughts of it ſo unavoidable, even to the moſt chearful and unconcerned, that no Man can be truly happy, or at Eaſe in his Mind, ſo long as he is under the Tyranny of that Paſſion. But, if a Man duly remembers Chriſt's Reſurrection, and his own, he will ſoon get above the Fear of Death; for that will infallibly ſo incline him to behave himſelf,

himself, as to be well assured of a happy Resurrection: And when we are come to that Assurance, what Consolation can we want? Or what Dangers need we fear? But, God be thanked, the Case is not so with us; it is now no Crime against the State; it is not penal to confess Christ crucified, and to own his Resurrection. The Powers of the World are now on our Side, and require us, as well as God, to believe and confess it. So that, one would think, we should always have this Doctrine in our Thoughts; because, we may know, by sad Experience, how very possible it is for other Things, as well as Persecutions, and the Terrors that attend them, to draw off our Minds from the sincere Belief, and due Consideration of this Doctrine. For Dangers and Fears have not made more Men renounce the Faith, than Luxury and Sloth hath made it ineffectual. To prevent this, let us, as the Apostle adviseth, have it always in our Thoughts; which will give us so much Delight, and make our Lives innocent and comfortable here, and will crown us with everlasting Happiness hereafter. For he, who often remembers he must rise to Judgment, and give an Account of what-

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ever he hath done in the *Body*; he only, who lives under a conſtant Senſe of ſuch a Trial, hath a ſufficient Defence againſt all the flattering Temptations of the World; and can never want Encouragement to the Practice of every Thing that is good and virtuous. This Man, when he finds his Deſires enlarging themſelves beyond the Bounds of Reaſon and Religion, of Convenience or Neceſſity, will check them with this Reflection: Why ſo much Eagerneſs and Concern, for theſe tranſitory Things? Why ſuch an inſatiable Thirſt for Riches? Why no End of adding Houſe to Houſe, and Field to Field? This World is not the laſt State of Things; there is another Life to come, wherein theſe Things will be of no other Uſe, but to increaſe our Account: And, if we have not employ'd them to our Maſter's Glory, will only add more to the Weight of our Guilt, and heat our Furnace hotter by ſeven Times, than otherwiſe it would have been.

A FEW ſuch Thoughts as theſe, will chill the warmeſt Deſires we can harbour in our Breaſts, for what Men call the Proſperity of the World. And, by thus ſecuring our Innocence, it lays a ſure Foundation of Comfort

Comfort againſt all the unavoidable Troubles and Afflictions, we can meet with in the World. I believe, there is no Occaſion to prove *Job*'s Obſervation, that is, *That Man is born to Trouble*, to be true; the Multitude of Complainers may ſave me that Labour. It will be more material to inquire, what Remedy God hath provided for Grief? What Comfort for Affliction? What Recompence can a Man make to himſelf, for all the Troubles he endures? I will not now ſtand to ſhew the Inſufficiency of all human Means; but conclude with ſaying, that a due *Remembrance of the Doctrine of the Text*, is the beſt Expedient, that can be. It not only cleanſes, but heals us too. To meditate upon our Saviour's Reſurrection, and our own, comforts, as well as ſanctifies. And indeed, what Conſolation can be ſtronger? Or what State of Life ſo uncomfortable, which this Reflection is not ſufficient to compoſe and ſweeten? How great a Comfort is it, for a Man under bodily Grief and Pain, to remember that he is paſſing to a State, where there will be no more Sorrow and Pain, and where all Tears ſhall be wiped from our Eyes?

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SERM. X. How great a Support is it, to a Man under hard Circumſtances in the World, to remember, that there is no Perſon in the World, ſo great or happy, ſo honoured or beloved, but that, having a little Patience, he himſelf ſhall be much more ſo! How ſtrong a Conſolation is it to any of us, to remember, that all we ſuffer here, ſhall turn to a good Account hereafter, if we take care to behave ourſelves unblameably, in all holy and godly Converſation!

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SERMON XI.

On FAITH and UNBELIEF, particularly that of St. THOMAS.

JOHN xx. 29.

Jeſus ſaith unto him, Thomas, becauſe thou haſt ſeen me, thou haſt believed; bleſſed are they that have not ſeen, and yet have believed.

THESE Words are a Rebuke of our Bleſſed Saviour to St. *Thomas*, for his obſtinate Diſbelief of the Aſſurances, which his Fellow-Diſciples had given him, that Chriſt was riſen from the Dead. And as there is ſomething very particular in the Relation that the Evangeliſt St. *John* gives us, I beg Leave, before I conſider the Text itſelf, to make ſome Obſervations upon the Behaviour of St. *Thomas*, and particularly upon his putting his Finger into

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into the Print of the Nails, which they made in our Saviour's Hands, and thrusting his Hand into his Side.

We have, in this Chapter, an Account of several Appearances of our Saviour, after his Resurrection, to confirm his Disciples and Followers in the Reality of it. His first Appearance was to *Mary Magdalene* alone, who was weeping at the Sepulchre, upon her finding the Stone, which covered the Mouth of it, removed, and his Body missing. Whilst she was grieving herself for the supposed Loss of her Master's Body, he appeared before her; and when, in the Ecstasy of her Joy and Surprize, she would have touched him, to be more fully convinced of the Truth of what she saw, he forbad her, saying, *Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: But go to my Brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God.* This welcome News she immediately imparts to the Disciples; and in the Evening of the same Day, *Jesus* appeared to them also, and confirmed them in what they had seen, by shewing them his Hands and his Side. Convinced by such Proofs, that it was

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Jeſus indeed, they, with great Joy, told St. *Thomas*, who happened to be abſent at that Time, that they had ſeen the Lord, and that he had ſhewed them even the Wounds which the Nails had made in his Hands; and his Side, which was pierced by the Soldier's Spear. But, far from crediting their Relation, St. *Thomas* told them, that he would have more certain Proof before he would believe them; that he would put his Fingers even into the Print of the Nails in his Hands, which they pretended to have ſeen; and thruſt his Hand into his wounded Side. In this Reſolution he continued till eight Days were accompliſhed, when *Jeſus* appeared in the midſt of them; and, after he had addreſſed them with this kind Salutation, *Peace be unto you*, ſaid to *Thomas*, *Reach hither thy Finger, and behold my Hands; and reach hither thy Hand, and thruſt it into my Side: And be not faithleſs, but believing. And Thomas anſwered and ſaid unto him, My Lord, and my God!* Serm. XI.

From which Words moſt Chriſtians have generally ſuppoſed, that *Thomas* actually put his Finger into the Wounds of our Saviour. But if we conſider the Place, it doth

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doth not appear to countenance such a Construction; and if we reflect a little upon the Action itself, it carries so much Cruelty in it, as is repugnant to the Tenderness of human Nature. Only to see the Wound of a Friend gives us a sensible Uneasiness; and we are in Pain when we see it probed, though with the Hand of the most skilful Surgeon: But to put our own Hands into it ourselves, to be satisfied of the Reality of it, is such a shocking Action, that the most savage Nature, or the most confirmed and rankest Hatred, could hardly force upon themselves, to their worst Enemy, much less to their greatest Friend.

And, without Doubt, St. *Thomas*, when he saw our Saviour appear before him, and bid him reach hither his Finger and behold his Hands, and reach hither his Hand and thrust it into his Side, was confounded, ashamed, and convinced, at the same Time; he blushed for his own Infidelity, and, far from touching our Saviour's Body, cried out, in the Fulness of his Conviction, *My Lord, and my God!* I am convinced that thou art risen from the Dead, and need not touch thee to be satisfied of it. And that he did not touch him, our Saviour's Words in the Text seem to intimate:

intimate: *Thomas, becauſe thou haſt ſeen me, thou haſt believed*; whereas, had he touched him too, it would have been more proper to have ſaid, *Becauſe thou haſt ſeen* and touched *me, thou haſt believed*; *bleſſed are they who have not ſeen*, nor touched me, *and yet have believed.* SERM. XI.

HAVING thus given you my Interpretation of the Behaviour of St. *Thomas*, which gave Occaſion to the gentle Admonition of our Saviour in the Words of my Text; I come now to conſider the Text itſelf, and ſhew what our Saviour intended by it.

BY the Word *Bleſſed*, we are to underſtand that *Happineſs* which good Men ſhall receive hereafter, as a *Reward* for their different Improvements in Virtue, and which will be increaſed according to the Number of Temptations they have overcome, or by their doing what is right with fewer Helps, and under greater Diſadvantages. Thus [a], *They that be wiſe ſhall ſhine as the Brightneſs of the Firmament*; *and they that turn many to Righteouſneſs, as the Stars for ever and ever.* And in the Text, when our Saviour pronounces thoſe *bleſſed, who have not ſeen, and yet have believed*, we are to underſtand

[a] *Dan.* xii. 3.

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ſtand him in a *comparative Senſe*, as if he had ſaid, that they ſhall receive a greater Recompence of Reward, who have believed in him and his Doctrine, according to the Number of Diſadvantages they have laboured under; and who, with leſs Light, have found out the Way of Truth. For *Faith* is not praiſe-worthy upon this Account, that we believe what we have ſeen with our Eyes, and therefore can no longer doubt of; but on this Account, that we yield our Aſſent to Arguments highly probable, and againſt which we have nothing ſolid to object; and ſuch Evidence as wiſe Men conſent to, and act by, in the moſt important Concernments of this preſent Life; becauſe this ſhews a greater Affection to the Objects of our Faith, and a better Inclination to obey the Will of God.

And of this Sort we have Arguments ſufficiently ſtrong, to evince the Reaſonableneſs of our Belief, though Faith cannot have the Evidence, either of Senſe, or Demonſtration. The viſible Things of the World do clearly ſhew the inviſible Power that made them; and though ſome Men may not be able ſtrictly to demonſtrate it, yet they have ſufficient Reaſon, from what they

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are able to understand and observe, to be fully persuaded of the Truth of the Being of a God, and of his Government of the World. So also, though we have not a demonstrative Evidence of the Truth of the Miracles, which were wrought for the Confirmation of the Christian Religion; yet, the Consideration that the Apostles and Disciples were Eye-Witnesses of those wonderful Things, that our Blessed Saviour did; that the Religion, to vindicate and establish which, they were wrought, was worthy of God, and suitable to the Nature and Perfections of an infinitely wise and good Being; that the Apostles themselves underwent all Sorts of Afflictions, nay, even Death itself with Chearfulness, as a Testimony of the Truth of those Facts; all these Reasons, I say, give the greatest Credibility to the Miracles, which are recorded in the Evangelists.

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So also, though the Doctrines of the Immortality of the Soul, and a future State of Rewards and Punishments, cannot be demonstrated with the Evidence of Sense; yet, the Consideration of God's Goodness, confirmed by Revelation, would persuade a reasonable Man, that, as the divine Creator has made all Things very good; and that,

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as he has, particularly, made the Soul of ſo divine a Nature, ſo he would make it of the longeſt Duration, it was capable of: And further, that, as God was juſt, the Conſideration of that Attribute would induce a Man to believe, that, ſeeing the Providence of God doth generally, in this Life, deal promiſcuouſly with good and bad Men, and there is one Event to the Righteous and to the Wicked; there ſhall be a Day, which will make a Difference, and every Man ſhall receive according to his Works.

These are ſuch Arguments to confirm our Faith, as every reaſonable Man ought to reſt ſatisfied in. Upon theſe Grounds, we believe the chriſtian Religion; becauſe it was confirmed by unqueſtionable Miracles, of which we have as great an Aſſurance, as any Matter of Fact, at ſuch a Diſtance from the Time it was done, is capable of; and ſuch as the wiſeſt Men think ſufficient to ground their Belief upon.

For, if there be a God, who was the Creator of the World, and is now the Governor of it; is it unreaſonable to think, that his Providence hath a particular Concern and Care over Mankind, who are the

moſt noble Part of this viſible World? And, if he hath created them capable of Immortality, is it unreaſonable to think, that he hath provided for their everlaſting Happineſs, and hath revealed to them the Way to it, and the Terms, and Conditions of it? Without doubt, ſuch Proceeding is moſt reaſonable; and the infinitely good Being has given us as great an Aſſurance of the Truth of Revelation, as the Nature of the Thing will admit of. The Matter of it is worthy of God, its Doctrines are uſeful, its Precepts reaſonable, its Arguments powerful, and the Truth of all confirmed by the moſt unqueſtionable Miracles. SERM. XI.

If there remain any Difficulties, which we cannot account for, or any Objections ſtarted, that we may not be able to anſwer in Religion; let us remember, this may be owing to the Weakneſs of our Capacities, or to the natural Imperfection of human Underſtanding. Finite Natures, ſuch as ours, muſt be liable to much Imperfection; and the moſt enlarged Underſtanding, to much Uncertainty: Therefore, a Diſpoſition of Mind, to receive and believe the great Truths of Religion, though relating to Things at preſent *inviſible* and remote from

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Senſe, is highly commendable; as the Text ſays, *Bleſſed are they, that have not ſeen, and yet have believed.* Becauſe, to aſſent to the Teſtimony of God, is both an Act of Duty and Wiſdom in us; it argues a right Uſe of our Underſtanding, and thoſe natural Abilities, which God hath beſtowed upon us, and a general Approbation of Goodneſs: And, becauſe the Things propounded to our Faith, though they do not want ſufficient Motives to enforce them, are not offered in the Way of *Senſe* and *Demonſtration*; there will be always Room for perplexing Queſtions, and plauſible Exceptions. To receive, therefore, God's Teſtimony, is to acknowledge his Veracity, and confeſs his Wiſdom; and at the ſame Time to renounce the too great Preſumption of our own. But by this, I would not have you underſtand, that under the Pretence of Religion, I am perſuading you to believe Things contrary to *Senſe* or *Reaſon*; for to do this, is both abſurd and impious, and tends to make Religion ridiculous, by taking away the very Foundation of all Knowledge and all Belief, either in Matters of Religion or any Thing elſe. For the Judgment of Reaſon being once ſet aſide, there

remains

remains no poſſible Means of judging, whether any one Thing whatſoever, be more reaſonable, or more unreaſonable to be believed, than another. All that I mean, is, that Men ſhould believe and willingly embrace thoſe Things, that are reaſonable, and act honeſtly, according to that Belief, though the Things they believe, are at preſent *inviſible*. And, in this Senſe, they certainly will be bleſſed, who have thus believed, and have not ſeen. SERM. XI.

The Infidel, perhaps, may eſteem ſuch a Belief to be only *Enthuſiaſm* or *Superſtition*; and yet this Man, for all his Pride, doth believe Things, which are neither Objects of Senſe, nor are capable of being ſeen, or underſtood: And while he taxes the religious Man with Folly, he proves himſelf to be the verieſt Fool in the World. For, if any Thing deſerves our ſerious Conſideration, Religion certainly doth: For, what is of greater Moment to every Man to be ſatisfied in, than whether there be a God or not? Whether our Souls ſhall periſh with our Bodies, or be immortal? And if ſo, whether Men ſhall be immortally happy, or eternally miſerable, according as they have behaved themſelves, and lived in this

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World? These Things are of the highest Consequence for them to enquire into. And every Man, who would not trifle away his Soul, should with the greatest Seriousness search after these Matters; and consider the Arguments that are brought for them. They have too much at Stake to trifle in an Affair of such Moment; and Jesting is here, of all Things, the most indecent. For, the utmost that wicked Men can pretend, is, that the Arguments for God, and Religion, do not seem to them strictly demonstrable; they cannot deny the Probability of them, and therefore it must be great Folly, to scoff at and banter those Things, which he knows not whether they be true or not; and if they be, he must expect to receive the most severe Punishment.

But to leave these unhappy wicked Men; who, as the *Psalmist* describes, *set their Mouth against the Heavens; and their Tongue walketh through the Earth*[a]; let me exhort you to believe in God, and receive that Revelation, which his Goodness hath been pleased to vouchsafe unto us.

God's Being is evident to every unbiassed Understanding: He fills Heaven and Earth;

[a] *Psalm* lxxiii. 9.

Earth; and every Thing in them, repre- Serm.
ſents him to us. Which Way ſoever we XI.
turn ourſelves, we meet with evident Demonſtrations of a Deity; as St. *Paul* ſays, *The inviſible Things of him, from the Creation of the World are clearly ſeen, being underſtood by the Things that are made, even his eternal Power and Godhead*[a].

It is the Intereſt of wicked Men, that there ſhould be no God; and therefore they bend all their ſmall Wit, and little Underſtanding, to find out Arguments to deny his Being, and his Providence; and cheat themſelves by Arguments, which flatter their Paſſions, and humour their Inclinations. But, let us act conformably to our beſt and right Reaſon; and ſo live, as it becomes thoſe who believe a God, and a future State.

As for Revelation, *let us hold faſt the Profeſſion of our Faith without wavering.* There is all the Evidence of the Truth of the Goſpel, or chriſtian Religion, that can be given us. We have abundant Satisfaction of the divine Authority of Chriſt, that he was ſent and commiſſioned by God, to deliver his Will, by the Prophecies which

[a] *Rom.* i. 20.

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were compleated in him, by the Miracles and wonderous Works which he performed, and by the ſurprizing Accompliſhment of his own Predictions. The Doctrines he taught, are ſuitable to the Nature of God, and worthy of him; there is nothing in the Propoſitions of Faith, but what is ſuitable to the Perfections of the Divine Nature; nothing in the Precepts of Life, but what plainly tends to the Perfection of human Nature, and the Advantage and Happineſs of Mankind; nothing in the Arguments and Motives to Obedience, but, what is agreeable to our Nature, and ſuitable to the Wiſdom, and Goodneſs, and Juſtice of God.

Let us then not wantonly require more or greater Evidences than God hath been pleaſed to give: What we already have are abundantly ſufficient to ſway reaſonable and unprejudiced Men. Let us not ſuffer ourſelves to be biaſſed by Partiality, or Paſſion, or Intereſt, to a contrary Perſuaſion.

Let us meditate much and ſeriouſly on the Truth and Excellency of our Religion; let us attend to the proper Conſequences of ſuch a Perſuaſion, and reſolve to live as becomes

comes thoſe, who believe there is a God, and a future State. SERM. XI.

LET us endeavour, as much as lieth in us, to obey the Precepts of his holy Word, being perſuaded, that whatever is there promiſed, in caſe of Obedience, or threatned, in caſe of Diſobedience, will certainly be accompliſhed.

AND let us labour to perfect ourſelves in this Belief, becauſe Faith is the Spring of all rational Actions, and according to the Strength or Weakneſs of it, our Holineſs and Obedience will flouriſh or decay.

LET us not reject the Principles of Religion, becauſe they are inconſiſtent with our Practices; but let us rather endeavour to reconcile our Lives to the Rules of Religion, and reſolve to reform thoſe Faults which Religion reproves, and which the Reaſon of our own Minds, did we rightly attend to it, would reprove alſo.

Laſtly, LET us take Heed of practical Infidelity, of oppoſing and contradicting the Chriſtian Religion by our wicked Lives and Actions. For though we profeſs to believe the Goſpel, yet, if our Deeds be evil, we do in Effect reject it, and love Darkneſs rather than Light.

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IN a Word, let the Mercy and Love of God to us, manifeſted in this wonderful Diſpenſation of the Goſpel, provoke us to good Works; and may we in Gratitude for the many Favours we have received from the Divine Being, and in Imitation of our Bleſſed Saviour's Example, whoſe Meat and Drink it was to do good, be ſtrongly excited and led to the Practice of all Kinds of Virtue, Goodneſs, and Mercy. *Amen.*

SERMON XII.

INDUSTRY and IMPROVEMENT, in our Chriſtian Calling, required.

PHILIPP. iv. 8. latter Part.

If there be any Virtue, and if there be any Praiſe, think on theſe Things.

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THE *Philippians*, to whom St. *Paul* writes this Epiſtle, ſeem to have been ſome of the beſt Diſciples of this great Apoſtle; they retained the Chriſtian Faith in greater Purity than many other Churches; and had given a noble Proof of their Chriſtian Practice by a generous and voluntary Contribution to St. *Paul* himſelf, when he was in Bonds and under very diſcouraging Circumſtances. A Carriage of this Nature could not but very much affect a Temper, ſo zealous, and ſo truly chriſtian as St. *Paul*'s: And therefore he ſends them this Epiſtle, wherein he

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he not only thanks them for their Charity, but alſo repreſents them under very advantageous Characters, ſtiling them his *Crown* and his *Joy:* And, having given them, in the foregoing Chapters, ſeveral particular Admonitions relating to Unity among themſelves, which is neceſſary to all great Improvements; and, to Humbleneſs of Mind, which is the Ground of all Virtues; when he comes to conclude, in this Chapter, he does it with an Exhortation, that comprehends in it, all the Kinds and Degrees of Goodneſs: *Finally, Brethren, whatſoever Things are true, whatſoever Things are honeſt, whatſoever Things are juſt, whatſoever Things are pure, whatſoever Things are lovely, whatſoever Things are of good Report*; and, in the Words of the Text, which are the Sum of all the reſt; *If there be any Virtue, and if there be any Praiſe, think on theſe Things.* As if he ſhould have ſaid, I would have you, whoſe fair Beginnings promiſe a mighty Progreſs and Advantage, not reſt contented with your preſent Meaſure of Knowledge, or of Goodneſs; whatever your Attainments are, there is ſtill enough behind, to raiſe your Emulation and employ your Induſtry. You muſt be eminent in every Thing,

Thing, that is juſt and honeſt, pure and lovely: If there be any Virtue, which you now poſſeſs, you muſt endeavour to improve it, and grow more and more virtuous ſtill; *if there be any Praiſe*, which is the *juſt* Reward of *Virtue*, and will riſe in proportion to the Height of your Endeavours, *think on theſe Things*; let theſe be your Morning and Evening Meditations: Let them be the conſtant Subject of your Thoughts; purſue them with an unwearied Diligence, equal to the Dignity of the Things themſelves, and the Danger of their Loſs. SERM. XII.

THE Words thus conſidered, with relation to St. *Paul* and the *Philippians*, will incline us to diſcourſe on theſe following Particulars:

I. THAT, notwithſtanding the Benefit of the beſt Inſtructions, a Man muſt uſe his own Endeavours, both to ſecure what he hath, and to obtain what he hath not.

II. THAT it is every Chriſtian's Duty, to improve in every Grace and Virtue; to ſtrive to out-do himſelf and others; and, if I may ſo ſay, to be *ſingularly* good.

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I. IT is certainly a great Bleſſing to be taught, as it were, by the Mouth of God, and by inſpired Meſſengers. It is alſo, of great Conſequence in the Ways of Learning, that it be meaſured out, according to the Wants and the Capacities of the Receiver. It is farther owned, that the Increaſe muſt come from God; his Grace is neceſſary for every Thing that is good and virtuous; and all this was evident in theſe *Philippians*: They were inſtructed in the chriſtian Doctrine, by St. *Paul* himſelf, who was miraculouſly called and enlightened from above; his extraordinary Gift of Miracles, his Zeal, Courage and Confidence, muſt needs make his Delivery pathetical; for, theſe Things are all of great Advantage, and muſt needs have had a mighty Influence on thoſe that heard him.

THEY had alſo, no Doubt, the conſtant Aſſiſtance of God's Holy Spirit, to make the outward Means of Grace effectual, the good Effects whereof appeared in the Soundneſs of their Faith, and in the Fruits of Charity. And, yet, notwithſtanding all theſe great and manifold Advantages, their State was not ſecure, nor their Reward certain. The Apoſtle thought fit to purſue them with

with his Exhortations, telling them, it was their Duty ſtill to learn; that they were always bound to uſe their beſt Endeavours, and exert their utmoſt Abilities and Powers, both to retain that Doctrine they had already learned; and to improve in every Thing that is neceſſary to make the Man of God perfect, and fitted to every good Work. However it is, that God illuminates Mens Underſtanding, and inclines their Wills, by the Operation of his Holy Spirit; though we know nothing of the peculiar Manner of his Impulſe on our Soul; yet it is moſt certain, that it does not ſuperſede the concurrent Induſtry of Man, that we are as much obliged to act and do the beſt we can, as if we knew not, that there was any Holy Ghoſt, or any Promiſe of it made to Believers; that our preſent Security and future Hopes do all depend upon our Care and Vigilance; and, that we are, indeed, by God's Appointment, the Authors of our own Deſtiny. It is evident to any one, that well obſerves the Works of God, that there is a Concatenation of Cauſes, in the Production of every Thing, whether purely natural or divine: And, though theſe may, and often do really differ from

SERM. XII. from each other, in Time, in Dignity and Power, whereby they contribute to the Effect; yet, they are all abſolutely neceſſary, and the meaneſt of them all, deſtroys the moſt hopeful Project and Deſign. If, whilſt the Huſbandman ſits ſtill, the Earth brings forth no Fruit; in vain will he blame the angry Heavens, or curſe the barren Soil. And the ſame Courſe is taken, in the Affair of Salvation; for it is eaſy to remark, in the Language of Scripture, that the very ſame Effect, namely, of Remiſſion of Sins, Sanctification, or Salvation, is aſcribed to very different Cauſes; on God's Part, to his Mercy; on Chriſt's, to his Death and Sufferings, his Reſurrection and Interceſſion; on our Part, to Faith, to Repentance, to Charity, to the Sacraments, and to Prayer: From whence we muſt conclude, that though theſe Effects do not proceed in the ſame Manner, from all theſe Cauſes; yet, they all co-operate to the ſame End. The neceſſary Parts of Chriſtianity are ſo plainly connected to each other, that to go about to divide and ſeparate them, to attribute our Salvation, or any conſiderable Part of it, to any one of them, in *Excluſion* to the reſt, is in Effect to deſtroy them

them all. A Man's own Endeavours are as neceſſary to work out his own Salvation, as the Sacrifice of Chriſt was, to atone for his Sins. This is a Truth ſo manifeſt, and of ſuch Importance, that it ought not to become Matter of Diſpute. Growth of Grace, like that of Nature, is procured and maintained by ſound Diet, and frequent Exerciſe. It is a Reflection on the Wiſdom of God, to think that he is fondly enamoured with the Perſons of Men, without any Regard to their Qualifications and Endeavours; and it is contradictory to the whole Tenor of the Goſpel, which always encourages the Improvement of Grace with the Reward of it: *To him that hath*, ſays our Saviour, *ſhall be given, and he ſhall have more abundantly*; and the ſame is repeated for our better Obſervation, in St. *Mark* and St. *Luke*: The like is expreſſed by the Author of the Epiſtle to the *Hebrews*; where, having threatned the Chriſtians of thoſe Times, with the Expectation of Vengeance in Caſe of Apoſtaſy, he thus reſtores them again: *But, Beloved, we are perſuaded better Things of you, and Things that accompany Salvation, though we thus ſpeak. For God is not unrighteous, to for-*

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get your Work and Labour of Love, which ye have ſhewed toward his Name, in that ye have miniſtred to the Saints, and do miniſter[a]. From whence it is manifeſt, the Apoſtle expects a farther Supply of Grace, to enable them to perſevere, in Conſideration of what they had done before; to which Purpoſe, it is to be obſerved, that the Gift of the Holy Ghoſt is often placed in Scripture after Faith; which is true, not only, if underſtood of the extraordinary Power of Miracles, peculiar to the Infancy of the Church; but, alſo, of the more plentiful Effuſion of the Spirit, which all Believers receive, by, and after Faith, according to the Meaſure of their own Induſtry. And, to deny theſe Endeavours, to qualify for theſe Effects, is to ſuperſede all moral Induſtry; to aboliſh the Law and Powers of Nature, which Chriſt came to advance and perfect; and to deface the Works of the old Creation, to make Way for thoſe of the new. In a Word, all thoſe Places of Scripture, wherein we are exhorted to *grow in Grace, to abound in the Work of the Lord, to give all Diligence to make our Calling and Election ſure, to deſire the ſincere Milk of the Word, that we may grow thereby*; as on the one Hand,

[a] *Heb.* vi. 9, 10.

they imply the Difficulty of arriving at chriſtian Perfection, ſo on the other, they muſt ſuppoſe the Grace of God increaſing, and ariſing in Proportion to the Height of our Endeavours. Nor can the Truth hereof be conteſted, without introducing a Sort of levelling Doctrine in chriſtian Graces, as well as in Poſſeſſions, and making the Regeneration and Sanctification of all Men, to conſiſt in the ſame indiviſible Point. And, this leads me to the

IId. PARTICULAR: For, if we are obliged to uſe our own Endeavours, to ſecure what a Man hath, and to obtain whatever may be wanting; we are alſo obliged to employ theſe Endeavours to the utmoſt, to increaſe in every Kind and Degree of Virtue; to ſtrive to out-do ourſelves and others, and to be, if poſſible, *ſingularly* good.

IT is plain, from what hath been ſaid, that theſe *Philippians* were very good Proficients under St. *Paul*'s Inſtructions; but, becauſe the Apoſtle knew, that there was nothing more fatal to great Performances, than an Opinion of Sufficiency, he exhorts them earneſtly, leſt they ſhould fall; and all Chriſtians, as well as they, are obliged

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to hearken to his Admonitions; for, there is nothing more deſtructive to us, than a vain Opinion of ourſelves: To fancy that we are already ſafe, and as good as we need be for our Salvation; this tends directly to deſtroy that Safety, and to forfeit that Goodneſs, which we may have, and ſo much depend upon. It is, indeed, hard to conceive, that any Man, who hath a due Senſe of the Duty he owes to God, or, of the Reward he expects from him, ſhould content himſelf with a ſmall Degree of Goodneſs, though it may be real for the preſent; ſince, whatever Reaſons there are to diſpoſe any Man to be good at all, will alike incline him to improve in Goodneſs, if he attends to thoſe Reaſons as he ſhould do. For, upon what Account does any Man make a Conſcience of avoiding wilful Sin, but becauſe he believes and is convinced, that ſuch Sin is baſe in itſelf, injurious to ourſelves, and others; is forbid by God, our King and Governor; and, will expoſe us to eternal Puniſhment? Or, why is any Man concerned to practiſe Virtue, and whatever is praiſe-worthy, but becauſe he knows it is good in itſelf, profitable to others, is commanded by God,

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and will be rewarded with eternal Happi- SERM.
neſs? Now, can a Man, under ſuch Con- XII.
viction, ſit down contented all his Life long, with the ſame Degree of Goodneſs, which he had at firſt? Will not theſe Reaſons, the more they are conſidered and complied with, produce the greater Effects? And, what are theſe Effects, but Inſtances of our Improvement, and Tendencies towards a ſettled and exalted State of Goodneſs, which the Scripture calls Perfection? So that, for a Man to be no better at Fifty, than he was at Five-and-twenty, is a certain Sign, either, that he was not at all good then, or that he is not truly ſo now. For, what Account can be given of this Loſs of Time? Or, what ſhould be the Reaſon of this Non-Improvement? We muſt not, we cannot charge it upon God, as if he envied our Happineſs, and would not aſſiſt us in our Endeavours to be like him; it is no more than what he has commanded, and will certainly reward in Proportion to our Induſtry and Labour; and, therefore, will moſt undoubtedly encourage and aſſiſt, by his Almighty Spirit: The Fault, then, muſt be laid upon ourſelves; and can there be a greater Fault, than to have received the

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Grace of God in vain, not to have improved the Talents committed to our Truſt, nor be at all bettered by the frequent Uſe of thoſe Means and Ordinances, which God hath appointed in his Church, for that Purpoſe? Or, can theſe Means be uſed as they ſhould be, without Improvement? Without Doubt, they cannot: So that ſuch Neglect plainly argues ſo little Love of God, and ſo ſlight a Concern for our Salvation, as is not conſiſtent with the Continuance and Expectation of his Favour; and cannot but provoke him to withdraw the Grace which hath been given to ſo little Purpoſe.

WE muſt, then, endeavour to grow better, or elſe we ſhall certainly grow worſe: For, he that takes no Care to go forward in the Paths of Virtue, will, in Time, relapſe into Sin. It is not poſſible to determine, how long a Man, that is at preſent in ſome Meaſure good, may continue in that State without Improvement, and yet not forfeit the Favour of God, nor incur the Guilt of mortal Sin: And if it could be done, it could ſerve no Purpoſe of Religion, to let a Man know, how long he might continue idle and unfruitful, without endangering his Salvation. The beſt Way is to comply with

with the Apoſtle's Exhortation; and, *if there be any Virtue, any Thing that is praiſe-worthy, to think on theſe Things.* And as he taught, ſo he practiſed. For, though he was a Man of great Improvements in Chriſtianity, yet he did not thence conclude that he had attained to the higheſt Degree of chriſtian Perfection, or thought he was beyond any Poſſibility of Falling; but *kept under his Body, leſt, when he had preached to others, himſelf ſhould be a Caſt-away.* And to this Purpoſe, it is proper to obſerve, that it was not, till he was juſt come to the End of his Race, and was ready to be offered up, that he ſaid, *I have fought a good Fight, I have finiſhed my Courſe, I have kept the Faith; henceforth there is laid up for me, a Crown of Righteouſneſs.* In like Manner, when our Saviour would inſtruct us, with what Earneſtneſs and Concern we ſhould purſue after Righteouſneſs, he does it by Metaphors of Thirſt and Hunger: *Bleſſed,* ſays he, *are they, that hunger and thirſt after Righteouſneſs.* Now, as there are no Appetites more craving and impatient to be ſatisfied than theſe, ſo none continue longer with us: They never leave us, till we put off theſe mortal Bodies, from SERM. XII.

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whence they do ariſe. But, beſides that, the Nature of the Thing will not permit, that a Chriſtian ſhould continue long in a State of Infancy, and be no better, after many Years Profeſſion of the Faith, than he was at firſt; and moreover, our Security and the Danger of relapſing require, that we ſhould endeavour to proceed and improve in Goodneſs; ſince the better a Man is, the more eſtabliſhed and confirmed he is in Virtue, the greater is his Comfort, and the ſafer his Condition.

Now this is a Situation of all others the moſt deſirable: Let us therefore endeavour to poſſeſs ourſelves of it; and, as St. *Paul* adviſeth in the Text, *Let us mind theſe Things.* Amen.

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SERMON XIII.

The NATURE, USE, and DESIGN of PARABLES.

LUKE xiii. 6, 7, 8, 9.

He ſpake alſo this Parable: A certain Man had a Fig-Tree planted in his Vineyard, and he came and ſought Fruit thereon, and found none. Then ſaid he unto the Dreſſer of his Vineyard, Behold, theſe three Years I come ſeeking Fruit on this Fig-Tree, and find none: Cut it down, why cumbereth it the Ground? And he anſwering, ſaid unto him, Lord, let it alone this Year alſo, till I ſhall dig about it, and dung it: And if it bear Fruit, well: *And if not,* then *after that thou ſhalt cut it down.*

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BEFORE I come to explain the general Deſign of this Parable, it may not be amiſs to give you ſome Account of the Nature of Parables in general; why they are ſo frequently uſed in Scripture,

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ture, especially in the New Testament; and what Rules are to be observed, towards the right understanding and due Application of them.

THE Word *Parable* is used in many Ways, and several Senses, in the holy Scriptures. Sometimes it is put for any Sort of Likeness, or Comparison. Thus our Saviour says [a], *Now learn a Parable of the Fig-Tree: When his Branch is yet tender and putteth forth Leaves, ye know that Summer is nigh. So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these Things, know, that it is near, even at the Doors.* By which Similitude, our Saviour instructs his Disciples, about the Time of his coming to destroy *Jerusalem* and the *Temple:* That as they knew the Approach of Summer, by the budding and Leaves of a Fig-Tree, so they should know the Time of his Coming to revenge himself of his Enemies the *Jews*, by the Things he had foretold in the preceding Verses.

SOMETIMES this Word signifies any *Doctrine* expressed with some Obscurity, and under some Figure: *Then answered Peter and said unto him, declare unto us this Parable* [b]: Which was nothing else but that Doctrine

[a] *Matt.* xxiv. 32. [b] *Matt.* xv. 15.

Doctrine he had before taught: *Every Plant, that my Father hath not planted, ſhall be rooted up*[a]. SERM. XIII.

SOMETIMES it ſignifies a proverbial Saying: *Ye will ſurely ſay unto me this Proverb, Phyſician heal thyſelf*[b]; in the Original, it is, *this Parable*, τὴν παραβολὴν ταύτην.

SOMETIMES it ſignifies a Type of the Old Teſtament, prefiguring ſomething in the New: Thus St. *Paul* tells us, that *the High-Prieſt's going but once a Year into the ſecond Tabernacle, and that not without Blood, which he offered for himſelf, and for the Sins of the People, was a Figure*, or Parable, *that the Way into the Holieſt of all*, namely, *Heaven, was not made manifeſt, whilſt the firſt Tabernacle was yet ſtanding*[c].

BUT, in a ſtrict and proper Senſe, a *Parable* is an artificial Relation of ſomething as actually done; and conveying to us, under that Repreſentation, ſome ſpiritual Doctrine and Inſtruction. Thus it is, in the *Parable* of the Rich Man and *Lazarus*; of the Prodigal Son; and in this of my Text. Wherein Things are repreſented as actually done, though, really, they were not; but

[a] *Matt.* xv. 13. [b] *Luke* iv. 23. [c] *Heb.* ix. 8, 9.

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but only ſpoke to inſtruct us in ſome ſpiritual Doctrine neceſſary or convenient for us to know. Now, our Saviour made frequent Uſe of this *parabolical* or figurative Way of teaching, upon many Accounts.

1*ſt*, BECAUSE it was foretold of him, that he ſhould do ſo: *Without a Parable* (ſays St. *Matthew* [a]) *he ſpake not unto them; that it might be fulfilled, which was ſpoken by the Prophet, ſaying, I will open my Mouth in Parables, I will utter Things, which have been kept ſecret from the Foundation of the World.*

2*dly*, Beſides this, it was the moſt uſual, and familiar Way of teaching among the *Eaſtern Countries:* And, therefore, herein alſo, as in other Affairs, our Saviour complied with the known Forms of his own People. And, indeed, this Way of Inſtruction, by Parables, was uſeful to excite the Attention, Curioſity, and Induſtry of the Hearers, to find out and diſcover the true Intent and Meaning of them: Therefore, our Saviour, often, at the Beginning or End of his Parables, uſeth theſe Words, *He that hath Ears to hear, let him hear.*

3*dly*,

[a] *Matt.* xiii. 34, 35.

3*dly*, THIS Way of teaching by Parables, enters deeper, and affects *more lively* than any other Way. We are moved in a ſtronger Manner by ſenſible and viſible Things; and therefore, this is a very proper Way of teaching, and moſt ſuitable to human Nature, becauſe the moſt ſublime and ſpiritual Doctrines are, by it, brought down to our Senſes, and placed and acted, as it were, before our Eyes. We know not, for Inſtance, the particular Manner, how the Separation ſhall be made at the laſt Day, and what Courſe the Angels will take to diſtinguiſh the univerſal Appearance of all Mankind; but we know how to ſeparate the Wheat from the Chaff. SERM. XIII.

How ſtrongly Men are moved and affected by Parables, we have a moſt remarkable Inſtance in *Nathan*'s Parable of the *Ewe-Lamb* to *David*: And, no other Method could ſo effectually have convicted the King's Conſcience, as the repreſenting his Iniquity this Way; by which, the Prophet made him, without Deſign, paſs Judgment upon himſelf, before he let him know, he was indeed the Criminal.

AND the ſame was our Saviour's Method *of conveying* to us Things ſpiritual and inviſible,

SERM. XIII. invisible, by Things that are seen, and with which we are familiarly acquainted.

Now, for the right understanding of Parables, and applying them to our Instruction, we must take this Rule along with us; not to insist too scrupulously upon every Part and Circumstance of a Parable, but only to attend to the main and general Design of *the Whole:* For many Things are added in Parables, only to make the Story compleat, and the Representation entire.

THUS, for Instance, in this Parable of the Fig-Tree, there are four Years allowed by the Owner, before he resolves to cut it down; and, perhaps, this was a sufficient Time of Trial in a Fig-Tree: But, when we come to apply this Parable to its Design and Use, we must not confine God's Patience and Forbearance with his People, to any certain Time; because we know it not. We must take heed, that *we seek not* for mystical Truths in every Circumstance of a Parable, nor presume to ground Doctrines, (which we cannot otherwise prove from the Word of God,) upon such uncertain Conjectures: For, Parables are like Pictures, which, as they ought to represent to us, something natural and true, so there are many

many Things added to them for Show and Ornament, rather than Uſe and Service. In ſhort, no Doctrine ought to be raiſed from the Circumſtances of any Parable, nor urged any farther, than it can be proved that thoſe Circumſtances do neceſſarily belong to the true Intent and Meaning of the Parable; nor can any Doctrine ſo raiſed be juſtly applied to others, unleſs it may appear, that their Circumſtances are exactly the ſame with theirs, to whom the Parable was at firſt directed. Nor ought any Interpretation of a Parable made by private Men, to be any farther allowed, than as it is agreeable to the Doctrine of Chriſt and his Apoſtles, and hath been believed and profeſſed by the whole Church of God. SERM. XIII.

THUS much being premiſed, concerning the *Nature* and *Uſe* of *Parables*, and the Rules how to underſtand and apply them, I proceed to conſider the Parable in my Text.

IT is granted by all Interpreters, that this Parable does primarily and immediately concern the *Jews* of our Saviour's Time; and the plain Meaning of it is this: This People has been long unprofitable, has made

SERM. XIII. made no ſuitable Returns to all the Care, and Huſbandry, which God has beſtowed upon them; and yet, he hath given them Time to repent, ſent his only Son to dreſs and manure them; and, if this doth not work upon them, and bring them to Reformation and Amendment, there is nothing to be expected, but utter Exciſion and Deſtruction.

BUT, to be more particular: By a *certain Man*, in this Parable, we are to underſtand God Almighty: For, it is uſual with our Saviour, in his Parables, to repreſent God under the Notion and Name of a Man; to ſignify that Humanity, that kind and tender Affection, he hath for us; ſuch in its Nature, though greater in Degree, as Men have, or by Nature are inclined to have, for one another.

BY the *Vineyard* is meant the whole World, or more eſpecially the Church, which is often, in Scripture, called a *Vineyard*. By the *Fig-Tree* in this *Vineyard*, is ſignified the *Jews*. By the *Dreſſer* of the *Vineyard*, we are to underſtand, principally, our *Bleſſed Saviour*, who is the *great Dreſſer*, *Preſerver*, and *Guardian* of the *Church*. By God's *coming three Years, and finding*

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no Fruit on it, is ſignified his juſt Expecta- SERM. XIII.
tion, that the Means of Grace, which he had afforded the *Jews*, ſhould have redounded to his Glory, by their Fruit and good Works. It ſignifies alſo his Patience and Forbearance, in not deſtroying them, upon the firſt or ſecond Provocation.

By *Cumbering the Ground*, is meant, that the *Jews* were but unprofitable Burdens of the Earth, taking up that Room to no Purpoſe, which others might improve to good Advantage.

By the *Dreſſer ſaying*, *Lord, let it alone this Year alſo*, we ſee the merciful Inclination and powerful Interceſſion of our Saviour, to divert and delay the Ripeneſs and Severity of God's Juſtice: It is his prevailing Mediation, and Interceſſion, which can appeaſe the Wrath of God, and reſpite the preſent Execution. And the better to effect this, he intimates, that perhaps the Fault was not in the Tree, but in them that ſhould have taken better care of it; and therefore reſolves to dig about it, and dung it; but if, after all this, it was ſtill unfruitful, if nothing will prevail to make them better, *then thou ſhalt cut it down*; which plainly ſhews, that God will not al-

SERM. XIII. ways ſtrive with incorrigible Sinners, nor will our Saviour always intercede for ſuch; but that they muſt expect ſudden and utter Deſolation.

Now let us conſider the *Parable* thus explained.

IT is manifeſt from the whole Hiſtory of the *Jews*, that never any People in the World beſides, enjoyed ſuch extraordinary and diſtinguiſhing Marks of God's Favour, as they did. They were at firſt ſeparated from the idolatrous Nations round about them by God's peculiar Providence; were conducted by his immediate Hand into the fruitful Land of *Canaan*; had their Law from God's own Mouth; had his Preſence in a miraculous Manner among them, and his Voice ready to inſtruct them in their Doubts and Fears, in all their Wants, and in all their Wars. He ſent them continually Prophets inſpired from himſelf, to warn them of their Sins and their Danger; and laſt of all he ſent his only Son, the *principal Dreſſer of the Vineyard*, who by the unſpotted Sanctity of his Life, by the unparallel'd Holineſs of his Doctrine, by Miracles

racles as undoubted, and far more numerous than *Moſes* did, endeavoured to reclaim them; to bring them to that Faith and Obedience, which was the only juſt Return they could make for ſuch a Multitude of unexampled Favours. And yet the ſame Hiſtory every where tells us, that they were a perverſe and ſtubborn Generation, always inclining to Idolatry, rejecting and killing the Prophets, and ſtoning thoſe that were ſent unto them: And therefore God did frequently give them up into the Hands of their Enemies, and they that hated them were Lords over them; they were often carried into Captivity; and yet, upon their Repentance, were as often reſtored; till at laſt, when they had filled up the Meaſure of their Iniquity by crucifying the Lord of Life, they are now ſcattered and become a Reproach over the Face of the Earth. Now, in this Account we ſee, SERM. XIII.

1ſt, GOD's great Patience and Forbearance towards his People, notwithſtanding their manifold Tranſgreſſions againſt him. For God is not of the Temper of ſome Men, who lie in wait, and are glad to have Power and Opportunity of executing their Rage: He

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doth not willingly grieve and afflict the Children of Men: He bears with our Follies in Hopes of Amendment, and ſuſpends the ſeverer Courſe of his *Juſtice*, to try if the gentler Methods of his *Love* will do. It is certain, that, upon the Commiſſion of any Sin, a juſt Degree of Puniſhment becomes due to the Perſon ſo offending; it is manifeſt alſo, that it is not the conſtant Way of God's Providence, to make our Puniſhments keep equal Pace with our Sins: And this hath given Occaſion for great Complaints againſt God's Providence, and been the Foundation of much *Error in Opinion*, and *Wickedneſs in Practice*. But if we conſider Things rightly, we may ſoon diſcover, that the true Reaſon of this Way of Proceeding, is only becauſe God is wiſe, and ſeeth not as Men ſee; and is merciful and good, and therefore acts not as Men do.

For this Forbearance of God cannot be, becauſe God ſeeth no Sin in his People, or doth not perfectly abhor it; for why then doth he forbid and threaten, what he doth not hate? Nor doth this Hatred ariſe from light and accidental Cauſes, and therefore doth not languiſh by Degrees, for a Reaſon

that always holds good, to wit, the abſolute Holineſs of his Nature; nor is it for want of any Power, that God defers Puniſhment; for he that brought Light out of Darkneſs, Beauty out of Diſorder, all Things out of Nothing, can never want Ability to accompliſh the Purpoſe of his own Will. Indeed, the greateſt Man upon Earth hath not always Power equal to his Wiſhes and Deſires of Revenge; he may be forced to wait for Opportunities to execute his Malice, and we often ſee that before that happens, the Man's Heat abates, and his Anger is over; the Springs of his Paſſion ſubſide, and he returns to his wonted Temper, and perhaps is glad that his furious Intentions were diſappointed: But it is not thus with the Almighty. He is not ſubject to the Ebbings and Flowings of human Paſſions; it is as eaſy, and as ſafe, for him to puniſh at one Time as at another; ſo that this Forbearance of his muſt be imputed to more honourable Cauſes, ſuch as his *Wiſdom* and *Mercy*: He knows and pities our Infirmities, gives us Time to recollect and amend, being unwilling that any ſhould periſh, but that all ſhould turn from their evil Ways and

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be ſaved. Now, to ſuſpend the Execution of his Anger, when he ſo much hateth Sin, and is armed with ſo great Power to revenge it, is indeed the Mercy that is worthy of Praiſe. But,

2dly, BESIDES this Patience and Forbearance of God, ſignified by his *coming three Years and ſeeking Fruit, and finding none*, I told you there was implied in theſe Words, his juſt Expectation, that the *Jews* ſhould have brought forth Fruit anſwerable to ſo much Care and good Huſbandry; which teaches us this Doctrine, that the Deſign of all God's Favours and Mercies, (nay, and of his Judgments too, except ſuch as are ſent for utter Deſtruction) is to bring us to Obedience. There is nothing more frequently and more earneſtly preſſed by *Moſes* upon the *Jews*, than their Obedience, from the Conſideration of God's wonderful Works: For God never diſpenſeth his Favours without *Reaſon*, though he doth ſometimes without *Meaſure*: He is not bountiful through Vanity, or out of any Fondneſs to our Perſons; he beſtows no temporal Favour upon us purely and ſolely upon temporal Accounts: His Sun and Rain, the

fruitful

fruitful Seaſons that he ſends, and all the Bleſſings of his common Providence, preach to us Repentance and Faith, and Obedience and Love. His Deſign is, to work by our outward Senſes, on our Souls; and, by bodily Supplies, to convey a Leſſon of Inſtruction to the Mind: His Bounty excites us to grateful Affections, and his Judgments diſpoſe us to Fear; and God expects that we ſhould improve in Duty and Obedience under the ſeveral Diſpenſations of his Providence. SERM. XIII.

3*dly*, THE third Particular implied in *God's coming three Years to the Fig-Tree, and ſeeking Fruit, and finding none*, is, that the *Jews* might, and did actually diſappoint God's gracious Intentions towards them: From whence it appears, that God doth not force Men by an irreſiſtible Power to be good; he deals with us as rational and ingenuous Creatures; he prepares us by his Spirit, and aſſiſts us by his Grace for the Work of Obedience, but doth not compel us to it by his Power. Liberty and Love are the Life and Soul of all Religion and Obedience: The Worth of a Man's Spirit is ſeen in the Kindneſs of its own Inten-

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tions, and in the Freedom of its Desire to do what is excellent; and this lays a just Foundation for the Equity of Rewards and Punishments.

4thly, THE next Particular is, that God may, with perfect Justice, proceed sooner to the Execution of his Vengeance, than he often doth; implied in these Words: *Cut it down; why cumbereth it the Ground?* For God hath made nothing in vain, and to no Purpose; every Thing in the Creation hath its Work and Employment: The Heavens move by his Order, the Sun and the Stars shine, and the Earth brings forth Fruit, in Obedience to his Will: The Beasts of the Field, the Fowls of the Air, and the Fishes of the Sea, live to his Honour; but it is Man's peculiar Design and Duty to praise and glorify his Maker; to employ his Understanding in the Search of his Truth; to exert the Freedom of his Will in the Love of his Laws; to exercise all his Faculties, all the Advantages of Fortune, Nature, and Grace, to the Praise and Glory of that infinite Mercy, from whom he received them. And if he doth not so, if he makes no good Use, or but a bad

one,

one, of these great Privileges, he becomes the only unprofitable and ungrateful Part of the Creation, and gives the Almighty the justest Right and Provocation to cut him down, and make Room for others. SERM. XIII.

5*thly*, THE next Particular implied, is our Saviour's merciful Inclination, and powerful Intercession, in these Words, *Lord, let it alone this Year also.* He who took upon him our Nature, and felt the Weight of our Infirmities, is by that disposed to commiserate our Condition; and having merited by his Life and Sufferings an eternal Weight of Glory for himself and us, is ascended into Heaven, and sitteth at the right Hand of God, to make Intercession for us, and all miserable Sinners. And therefore he pleads (as Men would do for themselves) for Time *to dig about it, and dung it*; which intimates, that Men are always ready to throw off the Blame of their Disobedience, either upon God himself, or upon those that should have taught them better: But such Pretences will not serve; for we plainly find, by the last Particular, that Christ himself, the merciful Redeemer of our Souls, allows, that if,

after

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after all the Care and Pains which have been taken for our Reformation, nothing will do, *thou ſhalt cut it down*; which plainly ſhews, that God, as infinite as his Mercy is, may be tired and wearied out with Mens repeated Provocations; and that he will not always ſpare ſuch unprofitable and fruitleſs Trees. Let us, therefore, prevent the Deſtruction we fear and deſerve, by amending our evil Ways; let us repent, and turn from all our Tranſgreſſions, ſo Iniquity ſhall not be our Ruin.

Which God, of his infinite Mercy, grant, &c.

SER-

SERMON XIV.

On OATHS, and common and prophane SWEARING.

ISAIAH lxv. 16.

He that ſweareth in the Earth, ſhall ſwear by the God of Truth.

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THE Prophet, in this Paſſage, foretels the total Extirpation of Idolatry; and that all religious Invocation, whether of *Prayer*, *Swearing*, or the like, ſhould be performed in the Name of God, and of him alone. *He who bleſſeth himſelf in the Earth, ſhall bleſs himſelf in the God of Truth; and he that ſweareth in the Earth, ſhall ſwear by the God of Truth.*

AN Oath is a ſolemn Invocation or Appeal to God, as a Witneſs of the Truth of what we ſay; and is eſteemed and repreſented in Scripture as a Part of religious Worſhip

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Worſhip and Devotion towards God, by which we acknowledge that he is acquainted with all our Actions, own him as the ſupreme Judge and Governor of the World, confeſs his Goodneſs and Care in adminiſtring Juſtice, his Protection of Truth, and his certain puniſhing Perfidiouſneſs and Villainy.

Thus, when *Jephthah* made a Covenant with the *Gileadites*, they appealed to God as a Witneſs of the Truth and Sincerity of their Meaning: *And the Elders of Gilead ſaid unto Jephthah, The Lord be Witneſs between us, if we do not ſo according to thy Words* [a].

And thus *Solomon* addreſſeth himſelf to God, as an Avenger of violated Truth: *If any Man treſpaſs againſt his Neighbour, and an Oath be laid upon him to cauſe him to ſwear, and the Oath come before thine Altar in this Houſe: Then hear thou in Heaven, and do, and judge thy Servants, condemning the Wicked, to bring his Way upon his Head, and juſtifying the Righteous, to give him according to his Righteouſneſs* [b].

Such

[a] *Judges* xi. 10. [b] 1 *Kings* viii. 31, 32.

SUCH is the Nature of an Oath, a Part of religious Worſhip; and, like all other Parts of Devotion, ſhould never be uſed but upon the moſt ſolemn and important Occaſions; and then, with the greateſt Decency and Reverence: At which Times we are obliged to have Recourſe to it, and to behave as certain that God is conſcious to what we ſay, or undertake, and will ſeverely puniſh us, if we do not perform what we have engaged to do. SERM. XIV.

THOU ſhalt ſwear, ſays the Prophet, *The Lord liveth, in Truth, in Judgment, and in Righteouſneſs.* Some, indeed, out of a juſt Abhorrence of prophaning the Name of God, have imagined an Oath, even upon the moſt ſolemn Occaſion, when the Honour of God, the Benefit of our Neighbour, or our own Safety and Welfare is concerned, to be unlawful: But this is evidently falſe; for to ſupport us in this Practice, we have the Example of God himſelf, who, becauſe he could ſwear by no greater, is repreſented as ſwearing by himſelf. And when our Saviour was adjured by the High-Prieſt to tell him who he was, he immediately informed him, upon that Adjuration.

And

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And the Angel in the *Revelations*, when he foretels the great Changes that ſhould happen in the World, *lifted up his Hand to Heaven, and ſware by him that liveth for ever and ever*[a].

That famous Paſſage of our Saviour[b], *But I ſay unto you, Swear not at all; neither by Heaven, for it is God's Throne; nor by the Earth, for it is his Footſtool — But let your Communication be yea, yea; nay, nay; for whatſoever is more than theſe, cometh of Evil*; is not to be underſtood, as if our Saviour meant, that an Oath was unlawful upon all Occaſions, but that we ſhould not uſe it in our common Diſcourſe; and the Reaſon of this Prohibition was, becauſe the *Jews*, eſteeming it unlawful to ſwear by the Name of God in common Converſation, uſed to ſwear by Heaven, by Earth, by their City, and by many other Things; ſuppoſing, that by this Evaſion they did not offend or ſin againſt God. But our Saviour tells them, they were miſtaken; that when they ſwore by Heaven, or by the Earth, they included God in the Oath, the one being his Throne, and the other his Footſtool; and that all their

[a] *Rev.* x. 5, 6. [b] *Matt.* v. 34, 35, 37.

their Oaths, made even by inſenſible Creatures, were in effect Oaths made by that God whoſe Creatures they are. Therefore, ſays he, *Let your Communication be yea, yea; nay, nay*; that is, in your common Diſcourſe, do not, of your own voluntary Accord, call God to witneſs the Truth of what you ſay; for that is evil; and it is ſufficient that we uſe a bare Affirmation or Denial, according as the Occaſion calls upon us to uſe either of them: *For what is more than this, cometh of Evil*; that is, the horrid Cuſtom of common Swearing is a certain Sign of a bad Mind, and a Soul void of all Reverence of God; it cometh by the Inſtigation of the *evil One*, and Men are excited to it by him, who is the worſt of Beings, and bears the greateſt Hatred and Oppoſition to God's Glory; he knows it tends to our Maker's Diſhonour, and therefore he is ſo diligent to tempt us to the Practice of it. SERM. XIV.

THIS is all that our Saviour meant in this ſeeming general Prohibition; and it is not unuſual with him to expreſs in general Terms, what is neceſſary to be underſtood with proper Limitations. Thus he expreſsly ſays,

Give

Serm. XIV. *Give to every Man that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away thy Goods, ask them not again*[a]. Now, were we to practise according to the literal Signification of the Words, we should soon find Persons that would beg away all we have; but, as God himself (tho' his Fulness can never be exhausted by his Bounty) will not give to those who ask amiss, that they may make Provision for their Lusts; so neither are we obliged, by this general Command of our Saviour, to give to every one that asketh; because they may be unworthy of it, or we ourselves may, by such an injudicious Charity, ruin ourselves and Families. Nor are we not to endeavour to recover what others have deprived us of, tho' our Saviour says, *Of him that taketh away thy Goods, ask them not again*; because it is repugnant to the Law of Nature and Self-Preservation, tamely to bear the Loss of all our Subsistence, without endeavouring to recover what is unjustly taken away from us.

Therefore these, and such like Expressions, must be understood with proper Limita-

[a] *Luke* vi. 30.

Limitations; and this of our Saviour's concerning Oaths, is parallel to them. SERM. XIV.

To proceed therefore: Whenever we are called upon by a proper Authority, it is not only juſt and right that we take an Oath, but we are obliged to do it for the publick Good.

HOWSOEVER powerful human Laws may be thought by ſome to reſtrain wicked Men, yet the greateſt Security to Society, is that Obligation Men think themſelves under to be juſt and upright, as they muſt anſwer to the Supreme Being for all their Actions, and be puniſhed or rewarded according as they were good or bad. It is this *Dread of the Divine Being*, that is the great Support of Community; and where it is not, there can be no Security that Men will do right, but where their Intereſt, or their Humour inclines them.

THE Good, therefore, of Society requires the ſtrongeſt Obligations to be laid upon Mens Minds, to keep them juſt and honeſt: And to this End Lawgivers have always made uſe of Oaths, and have looked upon them as the greateſt Security to Society. And in the Holy Scriptures, God hath been

Serm. XIV. pleaſed to allow us to call upon him as a Witneſs, that there might be the ſtrongeſt Tie poſſible upon the Conſciences of Men.

But if they become too common, and are proſtituted upon every trifling Occaſion, the Strength and Confidence that Men place in them will be weakened; for what Dependence can be had, that ſuch Men may be credited upon their Oath, who at all Times, and upon all Occaſions, are blaſpheming the holy Name of God? Who can believe that they will regard God's Teſtimony, or dread his Judgments in this or that Place, who are every where affronting and contemning him by their Execrations?

But *the common Swearer* is not only miſchievous to Society, but he runs himſelf into many Sins aud Dangers.

Perjury is the general Conſequence of ſuch a Practice; for he that is continually ſwearing, both in Earneſt and in Sport, juſt as his Humour or his Paſſion inclines him, muſt be very happy not to ſwear ſometimes what is falſe, or promiſe what he cannot perform. Beſides this, as Swearing is a Sin that is particularly provoking

to

to God, the common Swearer may expect to be ſeverely puniſhed by him. He is bound in Honour and Intereſt to vindicate his Name from the Abuſe, his Authority from the Contepmt, and his holy Ordinances from ſuch Prophanation. Other Sins that Men commit, they endeavour, tho' in vain, to hide from God's Notice; but the *common Swearer* dares him to hear, rouſes him to mark, and braves him to judge and puniſh his Wickedneſs. SERM. XIV.

BUT ſuppoſe it was not ſo *heinous a Crime*, yet it is a Practice unbecoming *a Man of Reaſon and Underſtanding*. For to what End can it ſerve? It neither makes a Man the more believed, or any difficult Thing to be better underſtood: Converſation is not improved by it, nor any Relation of true or feigned Story the more lively, for being blended with Oaths and Curſes.

Men of indifferent Characters do not gain more Credit with *Men of Senſe*, for ſwearing to what they ſay; and Oaths are ſuperfluous in the Mouths of Men of Reputation. A wiſe Man endeavours ſo to behave, that his Life and Actions may teſ-

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tify for him, and that his *Word* may be believed, as much as if he took his *Oath*. And, indeed, a Man, that is ſo ready to ſwear upon every Occaſion, is continually making Breaches in his own Reputation and Credit, and tells you, as it were, that he is not to be believed upon his *bare Word*. And what an imprudent Step is it for a Man to undermine himſelf, and diſparage his own Veracity? If the World, for the future, do not believe what he ſays, he muſt thank himſelf; and, indeed, what Security can he give us to be depended upon, who hath ſo little Regard to his Maker, as to invoke his Name upon every Trifle?

To excuſe this *prophane Practice of common Swearing*, it is ſaid, that they mean nothing by the Oaths they utter; and intend neither any Diſhonour to God, nor Injury to their Neighbour; which if we allow them, yet ſurely they muſt be condemned, who thus wantonly introduce and make free with their Maker's Name.

Besides, it is extremely uncivil, and ungenteel (if they mean no worſe to their Neighbours) to offend their Ears with continual Oaths and Curſes. For though they,

by

by an habitual and wicked Cuſtom of Swearing, regard not the Diſhonour they do to the Almighty; yet it gives great Offence to ſerious good Men, to hear the Name of God, who is the Object of their Love and Eſteem, to be ſo ill treated: And, as theſe Men, who ſo contemptuouſly treat the Name of God, would think it very unmannerly, and reſent it, to hear others abuſe the Name of a Perſon, who was their particular Friend, in his Abſence, and would think themſelves ill uſed to hear him ever and anon abuſed in their Company; with much more Reaſon ought they to ſuppoſe, that virtuous and good Men muſt be offended to hear them continually blaſpheming God, whom they ſo juſtly eſteem as their greateſt Friend and Benefactor. SERM. XIV.

BUT farther: One would not think that any one of common Senſe would condeſcend to comply with ſo bad a Cuſtom, which muſt demean a Gentleman, and ſink him below the very Dregs of the People. Beſides, the Sin of Swearing brings not any Advantage along with it: Other Sins frequently repay Men ſomething for what they do; the Extortioner increaſes his E-

Serm. XIV.

ſtate, by his Uſury, and Oppreſſion of the Miſerable; and the Debauchee is repayed in the Enjoyment of ſenſual Pleaſure: But *the common Swearer* receives no Profit or Advantage; he ſins *gratis*, and ſells his Soul for nothing: And what Man of common Prudence would enter a Voluntier into the Service of *Satan*, and act for him, without being in ſome Meaſure paid for it?

By Way of Inference, therefore, let me intreat ſuch Men, as practiſe *this horrible Sin*, to conſider that Men, of all God's Creatures, (that we know of) are only endowed with the Faculty of Speaking; it is the peculiar Privilege and Prerogative of Men, and it is beſtowed upon them, that they may communicate their Thoughts to one another; that they may comfort each other in Time of Affliction, and give and receive mutual Delight and Inſtruction at all Times. But beſides this, it was given us that we might glorify and praiſe our kind and merciful Creator, from whom we are every Moment receiving Favours, and whoſe Goodneſs we can never too much extol.

This

THIS is the *true Uſe of Speech:* How wicked therefore muſt it be to employ the Tongue in nothing but blaſpheming and prophaning the Name of that God, which ought to be uſed in celebrating his Praiſes, in acknowledging his Benefits, in addreſſing our Supplications to him, and in promoting his Honour and Glory? SERM. XIV.

How impious alſo muſt it be to employ it in *curſing and damning our Neighbour*, which was deſigned to be uſed in promoting his good Name; in defending him from wicked Men; in inſtructing his Ignorance, and in teaching him his Duty to his Maker?

LET, therefore, according to the Advice of the Apoſtle, *no corrupt Communication proceed out of your Mouth, but that which is good to the Uſe of Edifying, that it may miniſter Grace to the Hearers* [a].

AND how many are the Topicks that may be diſcourſed upon, that may both pleaſe and inſtruct, that may chear and comfort one another! What a noble and inſtructive Subject are the Works of God for Converſation, and what Entertainment

[a] *Epheſ.* iv. 29.

Serm. XIV. must such Discourses yield us, while we are expatiating upon the Wisdom and Beauty that appears even in the minutest Parts of them!

How pleasing also must it be to hear and discourse on the Providence of God, and his Goodness to us! And if Men would converse on these Subjects often, they would find an infinite Pleasure in them.

Let us, therefore, so order our Conversation as becometh Christians; let that Tongue, which God hath given us to praise him with, be never employed in prophane and impious Discourses: But, as it is called our *Glory, and the best Member that we have*; let us, by a proper and rational Use of it, promote the Glory of God, and the Salvation of our own Souls. *Amen.*

SER-

SERMON XV.

On the WORSHIP of GOD.

PSALM xcvi. 8.

Give unto the Lord the Glory due unto his Name.

AS no one can reflect upon the Divine Being without conſidering his Perfections and Excellencies, ſo neither ought our Admiration of them to terminate in a bare Speculation. But, on the contrary, as God infinitely tranſcends all other Beings in the Excellency of his Nature, ſo our Eſteem and Value for him ſhould be in Proportion to his Dignity, which ſhould expreſs itſelf on all Occaſions in a ſuitable *Adoration* and *Worſhip* of him.

THAT

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THAT there is a Worſhip due to the Supreme Being, and that his infinite Perfections are the Ground upon which our Obligation to worſhip him is founded, hath in all Ages and Nations been generally acknowledged. Thus ſome of the great Men of the Heathen World tell us, That *the Nature of God may juſtly challenge the Worſhip of Men, becauſe of its ſuperlative Excellency, Bleſſedneſs, and Eternity: For whatſoever excels, hath upon that Account a Veneration due do it*[a]: And that *he is therefore to be worſhipped, becauſe of his excellent Majeſty and incomparable Nature.* All which is very conſonant to what we read in the ſacred and inſpired Writings. *All Nations, whom thou haſt made, ſhall come and worſhip before thee, and ſhall glorify thy Name; for thou art great and doeſt wonderful Things, thou art God alone.—the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all Gods. Let us worſhip and fall down and kneel before the Lord our Maker*[b]. *For thou, Lord, art high above all the Earth; thou art exalted far above all Gods*[c].

THIS

[a] *Nat. Deor. lib.* 1. [b] *Pſalm* xcv. 3, 6. [c] *Pſalm* xcvii. 9.

THIS Worſhip, that we are obliged to pay to the Divine Being, is of two Sorts, *internal* and *external*. SERM. XV.

THE *internal Worſhip* that we owe to God implies, that we have an habitual Thought of God; that we have the ſtrongeſt Belief in his Perfections; that we depend entirely upon him; that we invoke him in all our Neceſſities, and acknowledge him as the Author of all the Mercies we receive.

EXTERNAL Worſhip is ſuch bodily Actions and Geſtures as may expreſs the inward Veneration we have for God, and promote the Knowledge of him in the World.

THIS hath been thought ſo neceſſary to preſerve the Knowledge of the Supreme Being among Men, that all Nations have been very careful to appoint publick Places and ſtated Seaſons to his Honour; and taught, that Men ſhould enter the Temples that were dedicated to the Service of God, with the greateſt Humility and Modeſty; and, when they ſacrificed, to perform it with the utmoſt Seriouſneſs and Devotion.

As

SERM. XV. As I have mentioned *Sacrifices* as one of the Parts of *external Worſhip*, it may not be amiſs to take Notice what it could be, that could induce Men to believe, that the killing or burning of Beaſts or Birds, or any other Thing, uſeful to Mankind, ſhould be thought pleaſing to God, a natural Means of teſtifying our Subjection to him, or be uſed by Way of Expiation for Sin.

SOME have thought, that this general Practice of *ſacrificing* proceeded from natural Reaſon; but the more probable Account is, that our firſt Parents were by particular Revelation inſtructed in this Way of Worſhip, which was continued after the Diſperſion of the Sons of *Noah*, in the different Countries they inhabited, and was corrupted by many ſuperſtitious Ceremonies, according to the Genius or Intereſts of ſucceeding Times or Nations. The Reaſons, why God inſtituted ſuch a Way of Worſhip, might be,

1. BECAUSE *Sacrifices* had a typical Reference to that great Sacrifice of Chriſt upon the Croſs: Or,

2. BECAUSE, in thoſe firſt and ruder Ages of the World, Men being immerſed in

in ſenſible Things, ſtood in Need of ſome- SERM. thing to raiſe and fix their Imaginations; XV. and God adapted his own Inſtitutions of Worſhip to their Abilities, and was pleaſed to amuſe them with external Pomp and Solemnities.

BUT when the World were better able to conſider Things; when the Study of uſeful Knowledge had rendered the Minds of Men more rational and inquiſitive, as was actually the Caſe, about the Time of Chriſt's Birth; then God was pleaſed to introduce the Chriſtian Religion into the World, whoſe *Precepts* were more agreeable to the pureſt Reaſon, conſiſting in a juſt Regulation of the Mind, and in ſuch Practices as promote the Good of human Society, and moſt effectually conduce to the perfecting our Natures, and rendering them happy.

AND that ſuch kind of Worſhip is moſt rational, is not only evident from Scripture, but from the Confeſſion of all great and wiſe Perſons; who maintain, *that Men do, to no Purpoſe, endeavour to make the Gods propitious by their coſtly Sacrifices: If they would have the divine Favour, they muſt love and*

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and adore God in their Hearts, and be just and holy in their Converſations: That expenſive Sacrifices, and pompous Ceremonies, might be agreeable to the Ambition of Men; but they only were the true Worſhippers of God, who ſincerely believed his Being, behaved towards him ſuitably to the Greatneſs of his Majeſty, and endeavoured, to the utmoſt of their Abilities, to be virtuous and good Men.

AND indeed, if an honeſt and virtuous Mind was not preferable to coſtly Sacrifices and Offerings, none, but ſuch as were rich Men, could be religious; whereas the meaneſt Offering that is offered by a juſt and generous Man, who ſincerely loves and adores God, is in the divine Eſtimation of invaluable Price. Agreeably to this the Son of *Sirach* expreſſeth himſelf: *He that keepeth the Law, bringeth Offerings enough: He that taketh heed to the Commandment, offereth a Peace-Offering. He that requiteth a good Turn, offereth fine Flour: And he that giveth Alms, ſacrificeth Praiſe. To depart from Wickedneſs is a Thing pleaſing to the Lord, and to forſake Unrighteouſneſs is a Propitiation*[a].

And

[a] *Eccluſ.* xxxv. 1, 2, 3.

And on the contrary, *Zophar*, (in *Job*[a],) ſpeaking of the Wicked, tells us, that the *Joy of the Hypocrite is but for a Moment; though his Excellency*, or, as the *Seventy* tranſlate it, *his Gifts, mount up to the Heavens, and his Head reach unto the Clouds, yet he ſhall periſh for ever, like his own Dung.* God will have no Regard to the Largeneſs of his Sacrifice, but puniſh him ſeverely for attempting to impoſe upon him. SERM. XV.

HAVING ſhewn that the incommunicable Excellencies of the divine Nature demand our *Worſhip* and *Adoration*, I will next ſhew, that his *Knowledge* and *Wiſdom* ſhould excite us to *truſt, hope* and *confide* in him, his *Goodneſs* and *Juſtice* inflame us with *Love*, and the Senſe of his Almighty Power produce in us *Reverence* and *Fear*.

1*ſt*. GOD's *Knowledge* and *Wiſdom* ſhould excite us to *truſt, hope*, and *confide* in him. How much we all want ſomething to depend upon in this World, is too evident to need any Proof. The moſt happy Man is a weak and infirm Creature: For, what from the Impotence of his Mind, and the Diſorder of his Paſſions *within*, and the Troubles

[a] *Job* xx. 5, 6, 7.

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Troubles and Difficulties he will meet with from *without*, the conſtant Mutability of human Affairs, which neither can be foreſeen, or prevented, it is impoſſible for him not to want ſomething to protect and ſupport him. And there is nothing, but God alone, that he can ſecurely rely upon: For, as he is of *infinite Knowledge* and *Wiſdom*, he knoweth our Diſeaſes, underſtandeth what will be the beſt Remedy, and the moſt proper Seaſon to apply it. He doth ſometimes accompliſh his Ends without any viſible Means, making Men to thrive and proſper in the World, by ſuch ſecret Ways as they underſtand not: And at other Times he blaſts the beſt concerted Deſigns of Men, and overturns their Hopes; and therefore there is the beſt Reaſon in the World, why God ſhould be the Object of our *Confidence*. But,

2*dly*, GOD doth not only *know* what are the moſt proper Helps for us, but his Goodneſs and Love for us *inclines* him to concern himſelf for our Welfare. The neareſt and deareſt Relations, even *our Father and Mother*, *may forſake us*; and the Men we have obliged moſt, may deal deceitfully with us. While we ſail with a briſk Gale of

of Prosperity, they will be industrious to tender their Services, and make great Professions of Kindness and Zeal; but if the Storms of Adversity blow hard against us, they presently strive to escape the Danger, and either forget or renounce all Obligations of Friendship and Gratitude. SERM. XV.

BUT the Mercy and Goodness of God is over all his Works: He doth not desert his Creatures in the Day of Trouble and Distress; but, on the contrary, doth more especially extend his assisting Hand to such as are in Misfortunes and Perplexities. The *Fatherless*, and the *Widows*, the *Poor*, and the *Strangers*, are under his particular Protection: He is *the Father of the Fatherless*, he *pleads the Cause of the Widow*, and is stiled *the Helper of the Friendless*. His Love for Mankind makes him never weary in assisting them. He doth not grow cold towards us, as we do to one another, when we want Assistance and Support: Our very Necessities entitle us to his Favour and Help; and the Psalmist makes his Troubles a Reason for calling upon God for Assistance [a]: *O go not far from me; for Trouble is*

[a] *Psalm* xxii. 11.

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hard at Hand, and there is none to help me: I am in Misery, O hear me speedily. But,

3*dly*, GOD is not only of infinite *Goodness*, but he is of infinite *Power*; he can do whatsoever he pleaseth, and can relieve and supply our Wants, howsoever great and urgent they may be. The almighty Power of God, the Scripture useth as a sure Ground of our Trust and Confidence in him: *Trust in the Lord for ever, because in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting Strength. He shall deliver thee* (says *Job* [a]) *in six Troubles; yea, in seven there shall no Evil touch thee. In Famine he shall redeem thee from Death; and in War, from the Power of the Sword.—At Destruction and Famine thou shalt laugh; neither shalt thou be afraid of the Beasts of the Field. For thou shalt be in League with the Stones of the Field, and the Beasts of the Field shall be at Peace with thee.*

BUT when, to the *infinite Power* of God, we join the *Eternity* of his Being, we have the strongest Argument to trust in him. *The eternal God is thy Refuge*, saith the Prophet, *and underneath are the everlasting Arms*;

[a] *Job* v. 19, &c.

Arms; and he ſhall thruſt out the Enemy from before thee. No other Security can be found; all other Comforts are tranſient and fading. *As for our Fathers, Where are they? And do the Prophets, or Princes, live for ever?* They are all gone, like the Flowers that are cut down; they are returned to the Earth, from whence they were taken: *There is no Truſt to be put in them, for there is no Help in them:* But God is from everlaſting to everlaſting; *his Righteouſneſs ſhall be for ever, and his Salvation from Generation to Generation.*

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BUT if the *Knowledge* and *Wiſdom* of God, ſhould excite our *Truſt* and *Confidence* in him; much more muſt the Conſideration of his *Goodneſs*, raiſe in us a Love of, and Eſteem for him. For his Goodneſs is infinite; whatever is amiable and lovely among his Creatures, is derived from him; and, in Compariſon of him, is as nothing. We may perhaps be acquainted with ſome particular Perſons of great Accompliſhments, of uncommon Virtue, Wiſdom, and Goodneſs; but the higheſt Perfections that are in Men, are ſo infinitely diſproportionable to his, that they may be ſaid not to

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be in any of his Creatures.—Let any one take a View of the Works of the Creation, let him conſider this beautiful Fabrick of the World, and all thoſe glorious Lights that adorn and illuminate the Canopy of Heaven, and he muſt acknowledge the Author of them, and ſay with the Prophet, *How great is his Goodneſs! and how great is his Beauty* [a]!

IF we conſider his Goodneſs and Kindneſs to us, as Partakers of it, the Number of his Favours are ſo great, that it is impoſſible to number them. He is not only our Creator, but Keeper and Preſerver; he gives us all we enjoy, and is willing, upon Repentance, to forgive us what we have done amiſs; and *to whom much is given, they ſhould love much.* This is a Leſſon, that the very worſt of Men will teach us; and a Piece of Gratitude, that the Beaſts of the Field will inſtruct us in. *For the Ox knoweth his Owner, and the Aſs his Maſter's Crib.* The Man therefore that doth not love God for his Goodneſs to him, muſt be more ſtupid than the brute Creatures themſelves.

BUT,

[a] *Zech.* ix. 17.

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BUT, if neither his Goodneſs, or Kindneſs to us, can work upon our Gratitude; yet the Conſideration of being miſerable without him, ſhould ſurely prevail with us to ſeek his Favour; ſince our not having God for our Friend, and much more the having him for our Enemy, will put us out of all Poſſibility of being happy.

IF we were in Poſſeſſion of the whole World, and could enjoy whatſoever our Heart deſired, it would not content us. Man's true Happineſs is in the Fruition of the firſt and ſupreme Good; and that cannot be obtained, till we love God; and this we never can be ſaid to do, till we are truly religious. There is in all Mankind, a natural Propenſity and Inclination towards God; and Men are apt to miſtake this natural Propenſity for real Love. Thus the *Jews*, of all Men, had the moſt confident Perſuaſions of their Love to God, and their Zeal for him; and yet our Saviour told them, that *they had not the Love of God in them.* For it is not an outward Profeſſion, tho' accompanied with Zeal, that is a ſufficient Argument of our Love; nor is it our being even called to the extraordinary

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Works of propheſying and Miracles, and giving our Bodies to be burned, that can be a ſufficient Evidence of this Love. The Man that may be truly ſaid to love God, is he who looks upon him as his chief Happineſs, and, out of Affection for him, obeys him readily and willingly in all his Commands: And wherever this Obedience is not found, let Mens Talk be ever ſo much of their ardent Zeal for God and his Service, it is nothing but Hypocriſy. True Love towards God will always ſhew itſelf in doing his Will; and, indeed, this is the only Way that we can manifeſt our Love towards him. We cannot teſtify our Love by any Benefit we can do him, for that is impoſſible. It can be done no other Way, but by our Love of Righteouſneſs, and our Practice of Virtue. And in this we muſt be ſincere; we muſt obey him with all our Heart; our external Actions muſt not only be conformable to his Laws, but our Minds and Affections muſt be right with him.

We muſt obey him in all his Laws, not ſingling out what we like beſt, but endeavouring to *walk in all his Commandments blameleſs.* We

WE muſt perſevere in our Duty without fainting; for only *he that endureth unto the End, ſhall be ſaved*; and, *he that overcometh, ſhall inherit all Things.* SERM. XV.

We muſt alſo be *chearful* and *willing* in doing our Duty; we muſt love God with all our Mind; which is not only more noble and generous than the Obedience that proceeds from Fear, tho' that will not loſe its Reward, but will make our Duty more eaſy and agreeable; no Service being too difficult, no Labour too great, and no Hazards too dreadful, when we are moved by Affection and Love. If we love God, it will be our *Meat and Drink to do his Will*; we ſhall take as much Pleaſure in his Service, as a Man that is ſtarving with Hunger, or dried up with Thirſt, receives and feels in ſatisfying thoſe importunate Appetites.

LET us therefore endeavour to make that agreeable to us, which it is our Duty to do: Let Religion, in which Word, every Thing that I have ſaid, is comprehended, be our conſtant Employment; for nothing elſe can poſſibly make us happy: Let a Senſe of God's infinite Knowledge, Goodneſs, Holineſs, and Mercy, make us fear to

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offend him: Above all, let the Senſe of his Power affect us with Reverence and Awe; and it will have ſuch an Influence upon us, that (let our State and Condition in the World be what it will) we ſhall be perfectly at Eaſe; for *the Man that feareth the Lord, his Soul ſhall dwell at Eaſe.* He will be under none of thoſe frightful Apprehenſions, that diſtreſs wicked Men, who endeavour to throw this Fear of God behind them; for, by a conſcientious Diſcharge of his Duty, (which a true Fear of God always encourages him to endeavour) he is under God's particular Care, and may look up to him with Confidence and Aſſurance. For *the Paths of the Lord are Mercy and Truth, unto ſuch as keep his Covenant and his Teſtimonies.*

SER-

SERMON XVI.

On CHURCH MUSICK:

Occaſioned by the Opening the ORGAN at *St. James's, Clerkenwell*, 1734.

PSALM cxlviii. 13.

Let them praiſe the Name of the Lord: For his Name alone is excellent, and his Glory is above the Earth and Heaven.

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WHOEVER was the Author of this Pſalm, it was compoſed in a grateful Acknowledgment for God's Mercies and Favours; and is an Addreſs to all his Creatures, that they might unite their Praiſes, and ſing an univerſal Symphony to him.

IN the firſt and ſecond Verſes, the Pſalmiſt calls upon the cœleſtial Inhabitants, the Angels and Miniſters of God's Throne, to ſing and praiſe their Creator, who hath placed

Serm. XVI. placed them ſo much in Order and Eminence above us: *Praiſe ye the Lord from the Heavens: Praiſe him in the Heights. Praiſe ye him all his Angels: Praiſe ye him all his Hoſts.* In the next Verſe, he addreſſeth the Sun, the Moon, and the Stars, thoſe viſible Miniſters of God, which he hath ordered to give us conſtant Light and Heat, to invigorate, direct, and enliven the World; and bids them, by a beautiful Figure, praiſe the Lord, for by his Command they were created, and, by their ſurprizing and regular Motions, demonſtrate his almighty Power and Wiſdom.

The Heavens of Heavens, thoſe wonderful Monuments of his Power, in the infinite Space about us, are bid to praiſe him; the Clouds and Vapours, alſo, that are ſuſpended in the Air, and drop down Fatneſs upon the Earth.

From the ſeventh to the eleventh Verſe, he deſcends lower, and bids the Creatures that are beneath the Heavens, to join with the cœleſtial Hoſts in the Praiſes of the Lord, who hath ſhewn his Wiſdom and diffuſive Goodneſs in their different Formation and Uſes. *Praiſe the Lord from the Earth,*

Earth, ye Dragons, and all Deeps; Fire and Hail, Snow and Vapour, ſtormy Wind fulfilling his Word; Mountains and all Hills, fruitful Trees, and all Cedars; Beaſts and all Cattle, creeping Things and flying Fowl. SERM. XVI.

From theſe he addreſſeth all Degrees and Orders of Men; *Kings of the Earth, and all People; Princes, and all Judges of the Earth*; that he might inſpire them to ſing his Praiſes, who hath, with ſuch extenſive Benevolence, ſhared out peculiar Bleſſings to them all, which demand their continual Songs of Thankſgiving. *Let them*, alſo, *praiſe the Name of the Lord; for his Name alone is excellent, his Glory is above the Earth and Heaven.*

This Pſalm, as all the reſt were, was ſet to Muſick, and ſung in the publick Service of God; and my preſent Endeavour ſhall be to ſhow the Power, Uſefulneſs, and End of it in divine Worſhip.

One Reaſon, perhaps, why the Pſalmiſt, in his poetical Rapture, calls upon all Creatures to ſing their Praiſes to God, is, that as he hath created all Things in a natural Harmony, and given them a Property to be delighted with it; ſo he hath given them a

natural

Serm. XVI. natural Inſtinct to praiſe him with their natural Muſick.

Thus the Angels, who are intellectual Beings, ſing Praiſes to their Maker in an intellectual Manner, which tho' above our Comprehenſion, yet we may conceive ſo much of it, that it muſt be in the utmoſt Perfection, and worthy the Choir of Heaven. And that this is not pure Imagination, the Scripture aſſure us; where we read, that when the Viſion of Angels appeared to the Shepherds at the Nativity of our Saviour, thoſe bleſſed Beings ſang this ſeraphick Song: *Glory to God on High; on Earth Peace; Good-will towards Men:* Which would not have been underſtood, if they had not ſung in the Manner, tho' exceeding the Harmony, of human Voices.

Men, who are reaſonable Creatures, praiſe him in a reaſonable Manner; and the reſt of the Creation in a ſenſitive or natural Way.

How numerous are the Teſtimonies of Authors for the Truth of this! But, without mentioning any of them in particular, every Perſon may obſerve in Birds a peculiar Delight, while, as the Pſalmiſt expreſſes

preſſes it, *they ſing among the Branches.* And yet they are not only entertained with their own, but liſten with great Attention to the Sounds of artificial Muſick, and with great Exactneſs learn the Notes; which can proceed from nothing elſe, but that they, as well as Mankind, have the Seeds of Harmony in them. SERM. XVI.

BUT not Birds alone, even Beaſts themſelves, tho' their Spirits move not ſo quick and lively as the others, are affected with Muſick; of which, to omit others, we have an Inſtance in the delightful and moſt beautiful Deſcription of the Horſe in *Job*; who, when he hears the Sound of the Trumpet, and other martial Inſtruments, ruſhes into the Battle without Fear: *He ſaith among the Trumpets, Ha, ha; and he ſmelleth the Battle afar off, the Thunder of the Captains, and the Shouting*[a].

BUT, as Man excelleth all other Creatures in the World, ſo, of all others, he is the moſt affected with the Harmony of Muſick: His Soul is too ſenſibly touch'd to withſtand its Power, and his Paſſions are either raiſed or calmed by its inticing Sounds.

[a] *Job* xxxix. 25.

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Sounds. Nay, the very Misfortunes of Life are in some Measure alleviated by it; it gives a pleasing Respite to Pain, it softens and cools the Rage of Anger, and lessens even that Weight of Misery, which would otherwise be insupportable. Perhaps it might be for this Reason, that God let Man so soon into the Knowledge of it, to wit, that he might not want so good a Solace amidst the Calamities of human Life.

The powerful Effects of Musick we have many Instances of, in prophane Authors; but, as they are not proper for *this Place*, I will mention only those which are as equally surprising in Holy Writ. When *Saul* was under the melancholy Influences of an evil Spirit, his Servants advised him Musick as a proper Cure; and when *David* played on the Harp before him, the Furiousness of the evil Spirit was calmed; and he found himself cheared, and refreshed by it. *And it came to pass, when the evil Spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took an Harp, and played with his Hand: So Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil Spirit departed from him*[a]. So when the

[a] 1 *Sam.* xvi. 23.

the Zeal of *Eliſha* had raiſed his Paſſion againſt the Idolatry of the King of *Iſrael*, and thereby rendered him incapable of being acted by the Spirit of Prophecy, he called for Muſick to compoſe him; and he ſaid, *Bring me a Minſtrel: And it came to paſs, when the Minſtrel played, that the Hand of the Lord came upon him*[a]. The Antients, obſerving the Effects of Muſick to be ſo powerful, concluded that the Soul was either Harmony, or had Harmony in it; that there was a Kind of Affinity between the Soul and Harmony: And *Macrobius* ſays[b], *Omnis Animi Habitus Cantibus gubernatur*; that is, *Every Habit of the Mind is governed by Muſick*: And that, *Nullum eſt tam immite, tam aſperum Pectus, quod non Oblectamentorum talium teneatur Affectu*; that is, *There is no Soul ſo rude and barbarous, but is affected with ſuch Delights.*

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HAVING ſhewn the *Power*, I come now to the *Uſefulneſs* of Muſick in *divine Service.*

MAN being a Compoſition of Soul and Body, the Soul, from this Union, muſt labour under many Inconveniences, and ſtand in

[a] 2 *Kings* iii. 15. [b] Cap. iii.

Serm. XVI. in need of great Aſſiſtances to overcome that Dulneſs and Drowſineſs in her Devotion, which ſhe receives from the Body. She wants every Help to ſhake off that Deadneſs of Devotion, and to inſpire her Thoughts with Chearfulneſs and Zeal in the Service of God; and, as the great *Hooker* obſerves[a], "Muſick may be ſuch, "and of that Efficacy, as to carry the "Mind, as it were, into Ecſtaſies, filling "it with heavenly Joy for the Time, and "in a Manner ſevering it from the Body. "The Harmony of Sounds and Matter, "framed in due Sort, and carried from "the Ear to the ſpiritual Faculties of our "Souls, is, by a native Puiſſance, and Effi-"cacy, greatly available to bring to a "perfect Temper, whatſoever is there "troubled; apt, as well to quicken the Spi-"rits, as to allay that which is too eager; "ſovereign againſt Melancholy and De-"ſpair, forcible to draw Tears of Devo-"tion. The Prophet *David*, having "therefore ſingular Knowledge, not in "Poetry alone, but in Muſick alſo, judged "them both to be moſt neceſſary for the "Houſe

[a] Chap. v. Pag 37.

" Houſe of God, and left behind him, to SERM.
" that Purpoſe, a Number of divinely in- XVI.
" dited Poems; and, farther, added Me-
" lody, both vocal and inſtrumental, for
" the raiſing up Mens Hearts, and ſweet-
" ening their Affections towards God."

WITHOUT which Helps, our Devotions will flag; but with them, our ſpiritual Addreſſes will be rouſed up, and enlivened. We find frequently, that, when our Thoughts have been inſenſibly led away from the Buſineſs we are about, and wandered from the ſacred Duty we are ingaged in, a ſolemn Air of Muſick has made us recollect ourſelves, and join again in the Service we had ſtrayed from.

IF it ſhould be objected, that ſome Perſons feel none of thoſe pious Emotions we are ſpeaking of; but, on the contrary, find their Minds filled with Thoughts of another Kind: I anſwer, that this is owing to the Abuſe of Muſick; and it is Pity, that *that*, which is naturally deſigned to raiſe the nobleſt Paſſions, ſhould be employed to incite the worſt.

THE chief Uſe of Muſick was to ſing the Praiſes of God; and *Plutarch* tells us[a],

[a] Lib. de Muſica.

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that it was only uſed at firſt in the *Temples*, for the Worſhip of God; and not in *Theatres*, for the vain Delight of Men: And *Maximus Tyrius* affirmed, that it ſanctified their holy Myſteries. From whence we may ſee, what an high Opinion they had of the Excellency of Muſick, and the Aptneſs of it to promote the true Ends of Religion.

If it ſhould be thought not conſiſtent with the ſpiritual Nature of the Chriſtian Worſhip, to have Muſick in our publick Churches; I anſwer, that external Aſſiſtances are not inconſiſtent with the Nature of the Chriſtian Diſpenſation; which is not more expreſs in requiting a ſpiritual, than it is in requiring the Worſhip alſo of the Body. We are commanded, in Scripture, to *glorify God in our Bodies, as well as Spirits, which are his*[a], If, therefore, God expects the Service of our Body, as well as of our Spirit; it can never be diſagreeable to our Religion, to make uſe of ſuch bodily Worſhip, as in its own Nature contributes to that of the Spirit.

Under

[a] 1 *Cor.* vi. 20.

Under the *Jewiſh* Diſpenſation, Muſick was thought, and really was, greatly inſtrumental in raiſing and enlivening their Devotions; and I can ſee no Reaſon, why it ſhould not have the ſame Effect now. Our Bodies, I believe, are not of a different Nature from theirs; we are Men of like Paſſions with them; and, without doubt, our Bodies are affected with Harmony as well as theirs: But there is no Occaſion to prove, what every one feels within himſelf to be true. Serm. XVI.

Besides, we are of ſuch a Compoſition, that we are naturally affected and taken with Magnificence. The outward Solemnity of religious Worſhip, ſtrikes us with Awe, and makes us apt to conclude with *Jacob*, *Surely the Lord is in this Place, and I knew it not; how dreadful is this Place! this is none other but the Houſe of God, and this is the Gate of Heaven*[a], Beſides, if the pure and ſpiritual Worſhip of Angels admits of Harps and Hymns, as we read in the *Revelation* of St. *John*, there can be no Reaſon, why they ſhould be thought inconſiſtent with our Worſhip, who are of ſo different a

[a] *Gen.* xxviii. 16, 17.

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Nature from them, and want many Helps and Aſſiſtances to excite our Devotion.

Is the *Uſefulneſs* of ſacred Muſick ſo evident? Let us anſwer the *true* Deſign, for which it was introduced into divine Worſhip, namely, to the Praiſe and Glory of God. For this was the End and Deſign of the Pſalmiſt's Invocation of all Creatures, particularly of all Degrees and Orders of Men. *Let them*, ſays he, *praiſe the Name of the Lord; for his Name alone is excellent, and his Glory is above Heaven and Earth.* God's infinite Perfections, and the glorious Works of Creation demand our Praiſes: *O let your Songs be of him, and praiſe him; and let your Talking be of all his wondrous Works.* His Mercies and Favours to us, which we daily receive from him, ſhould fill our Hearts with Thankſgiving. A due Senſe of God's Mercies to him, made holy *David* cry out, *O God, my Heart is ready, my Heart is ready; I will ſing and give Praiſe with the beſt Member that I have. Awake, thou Lute and Harp; I my ſelf will awake right early. I will give Thanks unto thee, O Lord, among the People; I will ſing Praiſes unto thee among the Nations: For thy*

thy Mercy is greater than the Heavens, and thy Truth reacheth unto the Clouds. And, if a grateful Senſe of God's Goodneſs fill our Hearts, the ſacred Melody will raiſe and warm our Devotions; but, unleſs our Hearts are fixed, and our Minds attend the Buſineſs we are about, the fineſt Voices, and the moſt raviſhing Harmony, will be of no Uſe or Value in religious Worſhip. Nay, as the beſt Things, when corrupted, prove the worſt, inſtead of aſſiſting, it will hinder our Devotion, and fill us with idle, and, perhaps, worſe Thoughts. SERM. XVI.

Do we, therefore, join with the ſacred Muſick? Let us conſider before whom we appear, and to whom we are offering up our Praiſes, even to our heavenly Father, for thoſe Bleſſings, which, with an almoſt infinite Variety, he beſtoweth upon us: And then, while our Tongues ſing his Praiſe, our Hearts will join in Concert, and the Affections of our Minds move towards God. If we in earneſt reflect on his Mercies, we ſhall ſay with the Pſalmiſt, *Praiſe the Lord, O my Soul; while I live, will I praiſe the Lord; yea, as long as I have any Being, I will ſing Praiſes unto my God.* Then,

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when the Voices of the Congregation, and the Organ, move together, our Souls would be elevated to the higheſt Pitch; and, *as the Hart panteth after the Water-Brooks*, to allay her Thirſt, ſo would our Affections pant and thirſt after God.

And, to make this the more effectual, the Muſick ſhould be ſuited, not only to delight, but edify the Congregation: It ſhould be grave, ſerious, and majeſtick; and performed without thoſe briſk and airy Parts, which are unbecoming the Solemnity of religious Worſhip. It is owing to a Wantonneſs of Play, that many good People have in this Particular diſliked our Service; and therefore it ſhould be the Endeavour of the Performer, that his Muſick ſhould be in as ſublime a Stile, as the Dignity of the Occaſion requires. He is playing in the Preſence of God, and to his Honour; and it ought to be as grateful to him, as uſeful to the People. Light Airs may be agreeable to a Theatre, but not to the Church of God; and it is an Abuſe of ſacred Muſick, when it is uſed in ſuch a Manner. But theſe Cautions are not only neceſſary in Congregations, where inſtrumental

mental Muſick is eſtabliſhed, but equally ſo in thoſe, where the Pſalms are only ſung by Voices. And the ſame Care ought to be taken, that the Tunes are plain, and adapted to the Uſe they are deſigned, ſo that the People may join together in thus praiſing God; and that cannot ſo well be, when the Tunes conſiſt of too many Parts, which none but thoſe can reach, who have a tolerable Skill in Muſick. The Compoſers of the ancient Pſalm Tunes, ſtudied particularly to make them eaſy to be attained, as of more general Uſe upon that Account; and yet, with that Plainneſs, they preſerved a Dignity, which many, who have made Muſick their Study and Profeſſion, have acknowledged to be worthy of, and well adapted to the Uſe it is deſigned for, and hardly poſſible to be mended. And when they are ſung by a Congregation in general, they are greatly affecting. SERM. XVI.

LASTLY, Have we united in the Erection of this Inſtrument, to the Honour of God, and more ſolemn Performance of Divine Service? Let us, in Imitation of the Concord of Muſick, be united in the Harmony of Peace, *the Ornament*

Serm. XVI. *of a meek and quiet Spirit, which is in the Sight of God of great Price*; and is agreeable to the Religion and Design of Christ, who came to bring Peace and Reconciliation to Men: For at his Nativity, the Angels sung, *Peace on Earth, and Good-will towards Men.*

AND may God grant, that, as often as our Voices are joined in Concert with holy Musick, our Hearts, at the same Time, may be joined together in the Bond of Peace.

SER-

SERMON XVII.

On AGUR's WISH.

Preached at the SUMMER ASSIZES at CHELMSFORD, 1745.

PROV. xxx. 8, 9.

Give me neither Poverty, nor Riches: Feed me with Food convenient for me; leſt I be full, and deny thee, and ſay, Who is the Lord? Or leſt I be poor, and ſteal, and take the Name of my God in vain.

THESE Words of *Agur* contain a ſincere Petition to Almighty God, that he would appoint him ſuch a Situation in the World, as, on the one Hand, might ſecure him from the Temptations, to which Men of Wealth and Figure are expoſed; and, on the other, preſerve him from doing ſuch Actions, as Poverty and Want of Bread too frequently force Men to commit.

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WHO

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WHO he was, we have no Account of, any farther than what we read in the firſt Verſe of this Chapter: *The Words of Agur, the Son of Jakeh.*

SOME Commentators have thought *Agur* only a fictitious Name, made uſe of by *Solomon*; but there is no Foundation for their Conjecture, or Reaſon why *Solomon* ſhould ſtile himſelf the *Son of Jakeh*, rather than the *Son of David.*

OTHERS imagine him to have been ſuch a Sort of Man, as *Theognis* and *Phocylides* were, among the *Greeks:* And that theſe Remains of his, were Inſtructions that he gave his Followers, or his Friends[a].

BUT, whoſoever the Perſon was who wrote this, he ſeems to have taſted the two Extremes of Life, which he was ſo earneſt to avoid, from that Solemnity and Emphaſis, with which he introduceth it.

TWO Things have I required of thee, deny me them not before I die. Give me neither Poverty nor Riches: Feed me with Food convenient for me; leſt I be full, and deny thee, and ſay, Who is the Lord? Or leſt I be poor and ſteal, and take the Name of my God in vain.

THESE

[a] See *Grot. in Locum*, and *Patrick* on the *Proverbs.*

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THESE Words, in their natural Conſtruction, direct us to look upon God as the Giver and Diſpoſer of all Things; and ſhew us the Wiſdom and Piety of *Agur*, in his *moderate* Deſires of earthly Things, from a Conſideration of the Dangers and Temptations, that are the conſtant Attendants of either Fulneſs, or Want.

IN diſcourſing therefore upon them, I will,

I. SHEW that God is the Giver and Diſpoſer of all Things: And then,

II. DEMONSTRATE the Wiſdom and Piety of *Agur*, in his moderate Deſires of earthly Things, from a Conſideration of the Dangers and Temptations, to which Fulneſs and Want are expoſed,

I. I WILL ſhew, that God is the Giver and Diſpoſer of all Things.

THAT God hath created and given the Earth, with every Thing that exiſts upon it, for the Uſe and Comfort of Men, is freely acknowledged by every one that believes his

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his Being. But, that God aſſiſts or hath any Thing to do with the Deſigns and Views of particular Men, is by too many ridiculed and denied; who rely, with ſuch Confidence and Security, on the Effects of their own Wiſdom and Management, that they impute all their Succeſſes to themſelves, without ever conſidering they receive any Thing from the Hand of God and his Bleſſing: But if theſe Men would attend ſeriouſly to the Voice of Reaſon, or to the Advice of Scripture, they would ſoon be convinced, that their Opinion was ill founded.

FOR what Difficulty can they in Reaſon imagine it to be, for an omnipreſent Being, to order and diſpoſe of every Thing he hath created, according to his Will? The *material* World is allowed to want his governing and directing Providence, to keep its ſeveral Parts in juſt Order and Motion; and he can, with the ſame Eaſe, bring about his Deſigns in the *rational:* For, as he is infinite in Knowledge, he cannot be unacquainted with what is doing; and as he is infinite in Power, he can either diſappoint

point or proſper the Deſigns and Schemes of Men. SERM. XVII.

INDEED, in the common Courſe of Nature, God generally lets the Effect proceed from its proper Cauſe; as, for Inſtance, *if the Sluggard will not plow by Reaſon of the Cold*, the Conſequence will be, *that he ſhall beg in Harveſt, and have nothing.* And on the contrary, *he that tilleth his Ground, ſhall be ſatisfied* with *Bread.* But, when Men put their Truſt in theſe Things, when they depend entirely upon *ſecond Cauſes*, God frequently diſappoints their Expectations; for the Event of Things does not always anſwer to ſecond Cauſes. If we take a View of human Affairs, and look into the Hiſtory of the World, we ſhall find, that the beſt laid Deſigns have miſcarried; which has proceeded, not ſo much from unforeſeen Accidents, as Men call them, but from the Will of God, who, in his Government of the World, makes uſe of theſe, to bring about his own wiſe and good Deſigns.

IN the Scriptures we read, that every Thing we enjoy is the *Gift of God:* That from him are all the *Comforts* and *Conveniences* of Life: That *Riches*, *Strength*, and *Health*,

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Health, are from the *Lord*: That all the *Abilities* of our *Minds*, our Reaſon and Underſtanding, are Gifts from him, and he giveth them to whomſoever he pleaſeth. Thus God ſays to *Solomon*, *I have given thee a wiſe and underſtanding Heart*: And to *Moſes* he ſays, *Thou ſhalt ſpeak unto all that are wiſe hearted, whom I have filled with the Spirit of Wiſdom.* And as he *giveth Wiſdom*, ſo he *turneth the wiſe Men backward, and maketh their Knowledge fooliſh.* He *maketh the Poor, and the Rich*; he diſpoſeth of all Things according to his Pleaſure; and the Reaſon is, *The Pillars of the Earth are the Lord's.* He is not only the Creator, but Governor of the World; and neither *Riches*, nor *Favour*, nor any *temporal Advantage* can be obtained, unleſs we apply ourſelves unto God for it.

II. HAVING ſhewn that God is the *Giver* and *Diſpoſer* of *all Things*, I come next to conſider the Wiſdom of *Agur*, in his moderate Deſires of earthly Things, from a Conſideration of the Dangers and Temptations, to which *Fulneſs* and *Want* are expoſed: *Give me neither Poverty, nor Riches: Feed me with Food convenient for me; leſt I be full*

full and deny thee, and ſay, Who is the Lord? SERM.
Or leſt I be poor and ſteal, and take the Name XVII.
of my God in vain.

AND, *firſt*, of *Riches*. I believe the World is unanimouſly agreed in their Prayers to God, that he would keep them from the Oppreſſions of Poverty and Want. But, for a Man ſeriouſly to addreſs himſelf to the Divine Being, that he might not be *rich*, I am afraid, may be looked upon as an Effect of a mean, low and narrow Soul; and be made the Subject of *Ridicule and Contempt*. For ſo many are the Pleaſures and Conveniences that Riches procure, and ſo envied are the Pomps and Grandeur of the Wealthy, that a Man would run the Hazard of being thought, at leaſt, not right in his Senſes, that ſhould ſeriouſly pray to God to protect him from them.

AND yet, *Agur* was very wiſe on many Accounts in his Petition. For ſo many are the Dangers, ſo numerous the Temptations, with which the Great and Rich are ſurrounded, that every wiſe and good Man muſt think them purchaſed at too great Hazards.

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Hazards. Indeed, when Riches are uſed as *Inſtruments* of *Good*, they are certainly Bleſſings of Providence, both to the Poſſeſſor, and to thoſe who partake of his Bounty.

BUT how ſeldom are they uſed otherwiſe, than in indulging our Luſts and Paſſions? And what Man can ſay, that, if he were *rich*, he would not employ his Wealth in the ſame Manner? How can he aſſure himſelf, that he ſhould keep clear of thoſe Snares, that Riches would lay in his Way; and not abuſe that Power, which naturally follows large Fortunes, by Inſolence and Pride? No one can be certain, that he ſhould be able to reſiſt thoſe Temptations to Voluptuouſneſs, with which Eaſe and Plenty are ſurrounded. For it is very difficult not to oblige our vicious Inclinations, when our Blood is heated, and our Reſolutions weakened, by Intemperance and Luxury.

BUT there are other Evils that attend *Greatneſs*, which puſh Men on to obtain *Power* and *Dominion*, at the Peril of their own Souls, and the Deſtruction of the World. *Ambition* hears not the *Voice* of the *Oppreſſed*: Blood and Deſolation is her Food

Food and Delight: And the *Tyrant* and *Oppreſſor* himſelf cannot imagine he hath done Evil, when ſurrounded with ſo much *Flattery* and *Adulation*. SERM. XVII.

BUT how much happier and ſafer is the Man, who, by not having ſufficient to indulge ſuch a Paſſion, commits none of thoſe Exceſſes, that the other is continually prompted to perpetrate? But I need ſay no more; we know, we feel its Effects, in the Loſs of ſo much Blood and Treaſure, expended in the Relief of the Oppreſſed.

THESE are ſome of the Evils that attend Greatneſs: But the particular Evil that *Agur* dreaded, was, *leſt he ſhould be full, and ſay, Who is the Lord?* A Conſequence, one would imagine, if Experience did not ſhew the contrary, impoſſible to follow ſuch a Favour, as the Donation of Riches is: One would rather conclude, that the Senſe of ſo great an Happineſs, as to be freed from the Hardſhips and Miſeries that Poverty brings along with it, ſhould fill Men, who are great and rich, with the warmeſt Love and Reverence for the Giver; and never ſuffer them to forget, much leſs queſtion, or diſown his Being. But ſuch is their

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Pride and Insolence, that, when Men find themselves superior to others, they are apt by Degrees to imagine they have no Equal. Thus *Pharaoh* said to *Moses*, *Who is the Lord, that I should obey him?* That I, who am King of *Egypt*, and the greatest Monarch of the World, should submit to his Orders, who expect an unlimited Obedience to my own? I know of no Superior, and will submit to none.

BUT, we need not go so high into Antiquity for Proofs: Prosperity makes us all too apt to forget ourselves, and our Dependence upon God; it tempts us to neglect our Duty, and slight his Service, as if we were too great to pay him any Obedience, or stood in no Need of his Assistance. The Drudgery of Religion we leave to the Poor; we look upon ourselves as independent on Heaven, and are guided by nothing but our Humours and Passions.

SUCH were the Fears that induced *Agur* to address the Divine Being not to make him rich; for he knew, that, though *Pride was not made for Man*, we are too easily puffed and blown up with Riches, and tempted thereby to Atheism and Irreligion:

For

For *Man being in Honour hath no Understanding.* SERM. XVII.

I COME next to consider the other Part of *Agur*'s Prayer, namely, that God would deliver him from *Poverty*; the Reason of which was, *lest he should be poor and steal, and take the Name of his God in vain*: Lest the Necessity of his Wants should force him to be injurious to his Neighbour, and run into the horrid Crime of perjuring himself, to escape the Punishment due to *Theft*. Which relates to a *Law* among the *Jews*, by which, if a Person was suspected of stealing, and there was no Proof of the Fact against him, he was brought before the Judges to clear himself by Oath. *Then shall an Oath of the Lord be between them both, that he hath not put his Hand unto his Neighbour's Goods; and the Owner of it shall accept thereof, and he shall not make it good*[a].

AND how wise and pious was this Petition of *Agur!* For, howsoever determined a Man may think himself in his Resolution to do his Duty and act honestly, he knows not the Frailty of his own Heart in the Day of Trial. The Pressures of Poverty

[a] *Exod.* xxii. 11.

SERM. XVII. have a Weight, which few have been able to bear in Innocence; and to say with *Job*, *Though I die, I will not remove mine Integrity from me.*

BUT this, which I have now said, I would not have you misinterpret, as if I were excusing or extenuating the Crimes of our *common Felons*, upon Account of the great Difficulties Men lie under in being honest, who are poor; for these Wretches are not to be reckoned in the Number of those unhappy Men, whom God, in his Providence, hath suffered to be distressed and miserable. These Wretches do not commit their Enormities so much out of *Want*, as through *Laziness* and *Vice:* They have Hands and Strength too, to procure an honest Livelihood, if they pleased; but they are determined to live in their iniquitous Course, till they are taken away by the Law, as a publick Nuisance to Society.

THESE Wretches may be said not to rob for *Bread* only, but for *Fame*; and think themselves the more considerable, in Proportion to the *Number* and *Greatness* of their Crimes: To which they are in a Manner encouraged, though without De-

Deſign, by thoſe Relations of their Acti- SERM.
ons, which are printed in our *great Me-* XVII.
tropolis in particular, after every Seſſions. But, with Deference to the Judgment of the Magiſtrates, ſuch Accounts would be better buried in Oblivion, as they cannot be looked upon any otherwiſe, than as Treatiſes of Inſtruction for *Thieving*; and I am afraid, have formed too many unhappy Youth for the *Road*. Their Actions and Villanies, which ſhould never be mentioned, but with the greateſt Abhorrence, are related with ſo much Pleaſantry and Humour, and their Arts and Contrivances ſo well deſcribed, as if there were as much Merit in robbing a Houſe as taking a Town; or that an artful Thief, and a good Officer, were upon the Level: Whereas, all that ſuch Men ſhould expect, is to be publickly executed, ignominiouſly buried, and their Names and Memories forgot for ever.

THE Hardſhips of Poverty are apt to tempt Men, fooliſhly to complain againſt, and expoſtulate with God, as if he were partial and unkind to them. Thus *Job*, in the Bitterneſs of his Soul, complains unto

SERM. XVII. his Maker: *Is it good unto thee, that thou ſhouldſt oppreſs? that thou ſhouldſt deſpiſe the Work of thine Hands? Thou knoweſt that I am not wicked, yet I cry unto thee, and thou doſt not hear me; I ſtand up, and thou regardeſt me not: Thou art become cruel to me, with thy ſtrong Hand thou oppoſeſt thyſelf againſt me*[a].

FROM accuſing the *Partiality* of God, and his Providence, Men are apt to proceed farther; and to ſay, it is *in vain to ſerve God, and what Profit is it, that we have kept his Commandments?* Their Wants render them impatient and reſtleſs, and tempt them to charge God fooliſhly.

SUCH Conſiderations made *Agur* beg of God, that he would keep him between theſe two Extremes, and only *feed him with Food convenient for him*; as the moſt likely State to promote his real Happineſs, by not having ſufficient to run into thoſe *Temptations and Snares, and into many fooliſh and hurtful Luſts, which drown rich Men in Deſtruction and Perdition*; and by having too much, to be tempted to act ſuch unwarrantable Things for Subſiſtence, as are puniſhable by Law; or to repine

[a] *Job* x. 3, 7. and xxx. 20, 21.

repine againſt God, as if unjuſt and cruel towards them. SERM. XVII.

I COME now to make ſome practical Inferences, and ſo conclude.

Is God the *Giver* and *Diſpoſer* of all Things? Let us with a grateful Senſe of his Favours, acknowledge and praiſe him for his Goodneſs. Let our Condition, which God hath appointed us to be in, be what it may, we may have many Opportunities of rendering it advantageous to us, if we behave ourſelves properly and wiſely in it. Are we rich? Though it be very difficult for Men not to be lifted up, in a State of Proſperity, and be proud, and vain, and forget themſelves, while every Thing about them is miniſtring to their Delight and Pleaſure; yet, a due and juſt Reflection upon ourſelves, and a conſtant Remembrance upon our Minds to whom we owe our Wealth, will depreſs all vain and elated Thoughts; and make us careful to avoid all thoſe Rocks, on which rich Men are too often loſt: Inſtead of abuſing thoſe Talents, which God hath given us, to our own Deſtruction, we ſhall employ them in Acts of Charity and Benevolence, in re-

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lieving the Diſtreſſed, and in doing all that Good, which rich Men have only the Power to do: And, inſtead of diſowning the Hand from which we received theſe Favours, we ſhall bleſs him for giving us ſo many Opportunities of doing Good, and putting it into our Power of being uſeful to our Fellow-Creatures.

OR, are we poor? Though many are the Hardſhips and Temptations that conſtantly attend and harraſs poor Men, yet even they may reap much Good from the very Calamities and Diſappointments they labour under, if they will reflect from whence, or from whom Affliction cometh: Which will teach them Patience, and Submiſſion to the Divine Will, and make them look upon their Situation in the World, as a proper and wiſe Allotment for them. For, as ſome Tempers would be unequal to ſtruggle with low Circumſtances; ſo others would be as unfit for an exalted State. Proſperity too often captivates the Senſes, and overthrows the Reaſon; Men become vain and giddy, they almoſt forget that they are Duſt and Aſhes, and that they ſhall carry nothing away with

with them. Are we poor then? Let us acquieſce, and be eaſy in our mean Condition, uttering no reproaching Word againſt Providence, nor acting any Thing unbecoming Chriſtians, whoſe Duty it is to be content in all Conditions. SERM. XVII.

INDEED, we are not forbid to pray that God would better our Circumſtances, as if it was inconſiſtent with Contentment, to do ſo; but only to pray with an entire Submiſſion to his Will; and, if it be not his Pleaſure to anſwer our Petition, to reſt ſatisfied, ſaying, with our Bleſſed Saviour, *Nevertheleſs, not as I will, but thy Will be done.* Amen.

SER-

SERMON XVIII.

The FOLLY of trusting in RICHES.

LUKE xii. 20.

But God said unto him, Thou Fool, this Night thy Soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall those Things be which thou hast provided?

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THESE Words are the Close of a Parable, of which the Whole runs thus: *The Ground of a certain rich Man brought forth plentifully. And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do? because I have no Room where to bestow my Fruits. And he said, This will I do; I will pull down my Barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my Fruits, and my Goods: And I will say to my Soul, Soul, thou hast much Goods laid up for many*

many Years; take thine Eaſe, eat, drink, and be merry. But God ſaid unto him, Thou Fool, this Night thy Soul ſhall be required of thee; then whoſe ſhall thoſe Things be which thou haſt provided? SERM. XVIII.

As there is ſomething in the Deſcription here given, that is generally not obſerved, it will not be amiſs to examine it by way of Illuſtration, that you may the better ſee, wherein the Folly of this Perſon conſiſted.

1*ſt*, THE Parable tells us, he was a rich Man: *There was a certain rich Man.* But this could not be the Reaſon why God called him *Fool*, becauſe to be rich is not of itſelf a Crime.—Indeed, our Bleſſed Saviour ſays, *That it is as eaſy for a Camel to go through the Eye of a Needle, as for a rich Man to enter into the Kingdom of God.* But this Expreſſion only means, that Men, who lived in all the Pleaſures and Gaiety of Life, would, with the greateſt Difficulty, be perſuaded to enter into the Kingdom of God, that is, to become Followers and Believers in Chriſt, when their Profeſſion of him would expoſe them to ſo many

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many Hardſhips and Perſecutions, as was actually the Caſe at that Time. Now-a-days, the Danger of Riches, only ariſes from their Abuſe; and if we obſerve, we ſhall find in the Parable of the *rich Man* and *Lazarus*, that *Abraham* doth not blame him, becauſe he had been rich, but becauſe he miſuſed what God had bleſſed him with.

BESIDES, in the Deſcription that *Moſes* gives us of *Paradiſe*, we read, there was Gold in the River *Piſon*; which our good and kind Creator would never have placed there, if the Poſſeſſion of it had been incompatible with the State of Innocence.

So alſo we find, that the Patriarchs, who were ſtiled the *Friends* and *Servants* of God, were bleſſed with a great Affluence of all Things, that were neceſſary to ſupport and make Life agreeable, as a Reward of their Faith in him, and Obedience to his Will. And, in Truth, ſo far are Riches from being a *Curſe* to their Owners, that they are often the greateſt *Bleſſing* they can receive. For by them they have many Opportunities of promoting Religion, by encouraging and rewarding good Men,

and

and aſſiſting them in thoſe Straits and Diffi- SERM.
culties, which many of them labour under. XVIII
And it is a great Happineſs to the World, when Riches fall to the Share of a generous Chriſtian Temper. Every Day produces freſh Inſtances of his Goodneſs, whoſe ſole Aim is to advance the Glory of God, and the Happineſs of his Fellow-Creatures.

2*dly*, As it was no Crime in the Perſon in the Parable, that he was a *rich Man*; ſo neither was it one, that he was *induſtrious*; which ſeems to be intimated in theſe Words, *That his Ground brought forth plentifully.*

FOR tho' the Scripture tells us, that we ſhould *be careful for nothing*[a]; that we ſhould *take no Thought for the Morrow*, and that *ſufficient for the Day is the Evil thereof*[b]; yet we muſt not underſtand from theſe Paſſages, as if God encouraged us to be idle, that we might depend upon his Providence, or forbad an honeſt Endeavour, and induſtrious Application to advance ourſelves and Families in the World. On the contrary, it is very commendable, nay, it is our

[a] *Philipp.* iv. 6. [b] *Matt.* vi. 34.

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our Duty to do it; for the Truth of which, God hath created Things ſo, that without Labour and Induſtry, nothing will come to Perfection.

THE induſtrious Man, therefore, though he may be a wicked Man, ſhall be rewarded for his Induſtry: He ſhall receive plentiful Crops in their Seaſon; and his Barns ſhall be filled with the Fruits of his Labour.

AND the *Sluggard*, though he may be religious in other Reſpects, ſhall yet have his Ground filled with nothing but Thorns and Briars.

AND all this with great Juſtice; for as *Induſtry* is a Virtue, ſo God rewards it with thoſe natural Bleſſings of Plenty that attend it; and as *Lazineſs* is a Crime, ſo he puniſhes it with Want and Beggary: As *Solomon* obſerves, *If the Sluggard will not plow, by reaſon of the Cold, he ſhall beg in Harveſt, and have nothing*[a]; and on the other hand, *He that tilleth his Ground, ſhall be ſatisfied with Bread*[b]. Indeed, it ſometimes happens, that wicked induſtrious Men are diſappointed in their Hopes and Expecta-

[a] *Prov.* xx. 4. [b] *Prov.* xxviii. 19.

Expectations, and their wiſeſt Deſigns come to nothing; which God in his Providence ſuffers, to teach them, that his Bleſſing is neceſſary in all their Undertakings; and to let others ſee, that howſoever induſtrious Men may be, God can baulk their Succeſs, particularly when they overlook and neglect him. SERM. XVIII.

3*dly*, As the Perſon in the Parable was not to blame for being *induſtrious*, ſo neither was he to blame, that he was ſatisfied with what he had got, and deſigned to enjoy the Fruits of his Labour: *Soul, thou haſt much Goods laid up for many Years; take thine Eaſe, eat, drink, and be merry.* Moſt Perſons, who have wrote upon this Parable, have imagined, that *Covetouſneſs* was one of the Vices in the Character of this Man; which they found upon his pulling down his Barns, and building greater; and upon our Saviour's Concluſion of the Parable, *So is he that layeth up Treaſure for himſelf, and is not rich towards God.* Whereas, the providing convenient Store-houſes for the Increaſe of his Labours, was an Act of *Prudence* and not *Covetouſneſs*; and our Saviour's Expreſſion, *of laying*

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ing up Treaſure for himſelf, means, for his own Uſe and Pleaſure, without concerning himſelf about any one elſe, though ever ſo great an Object of Compaſſion. If he had been as merciful as he was rich, he might innocently have enlarged his Barns, and lived as chearful as he pleaſed. For the Chriſtian Religion no where forbids us the Enjoyment of thoſe Things, which the Bleſſing of God, upon our honeſt Induſtry, hath put into our Hands. The beneficent Creator hath covered the Earth, as a well-ſpread Table, with all manner of Things to ſupply our Neceſſities, and promote our Pleaſures; from which we are no where debarred, provided we enjoy them as rational Creatures. God is too good to have created theſe Things to be Traps and Snares in our Way. His Deſign in creating ſuch a vaſt Variety, was to make us happy; and we may reſt ſatisfied, that we may enjoy them with *Innocence*, if we be careful to do it with *Thankfulneſs*.

OUR Senſes were, in part, given us for this Deſign: We have our Taſte, not only that we might diſtinguiſh what is proper and wholeſome, but that we might receive

Pleaſure in the Reliſh, as well as Strength and Spirits from what we eat. We have our Smell, that the Odours of the Fields, and the Perfumes of Nature might delight us: Our Sight preſents to us the beauties of the Creation; and our Hearing charms us with the Melody of Muſick, and fits us for the Delights of Converſation. Indeed, theſe two laſt Senſes receive no Pleaſure, though our Taſte and Smell be delighted; yet, as they are made to adminiſter to our Happineſs, I hope they are not improperly placed here. SERM. XVIII.

HAVING ſeen in what this Perſon in the Parable was not to blame, I come now to ſhew in what he was. And his Folly will appear in theſe Particulars:

1*ſt*, THAT he put his Truſt in his Riches.

2*dly*, THAT he did not employ them to their proper Uſe.

3*dly*, THAT he depended upon living many Years.

1*ſt*, THE Rich Man was a Fool, becauſe he put his Truſt in his Riches.

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To talk of the Uncertainty of Riches to some Men, may be looked upon as mere Declamation: But yet, though we should allow, that rich Men may not now-a-days be liable to so many Chances of losing their Fortunes, as they were in former Times, the World being, by the Prudence and Wisdom of civil Governments, not in such a fluctuating and dangerous Situation as in those Ages; yet God finds out many Ways, in the Course of his Providence, to punish those who trust to, and entirely depend upon themselves for the securing what they have. Some unforeseen Accident snatches them away, and on a sudden sinks them into Want and Misery. How often do the Things which seem to have the greatest Appearance of Certainty, disappoint us; and the Men we confided most in, deceive us to our utter Destruction? How many others hath the Morning found reduced to the utmost Extremity, either by Fire, Inundation, or Tempests, who were the Evening before rejoicing in the Confidence of their Wealth? But without supposing these Things, how often does Almighty God deprive Men, in the most afflicting

afflicting Manner, of their Fortunes, if I may ſo expreſs myſelf, even while they have them; by taking from them their Families and Children, for whoſe Sakes and Comfort they were ſo induſtrious to heap up Riches? SERM. XVIII.

BUT ſuppoſe Riches were liable to no Accidents, yet they alone cannot make us happy.

MAN is a Compoſition of Soul and Body; and it is impoſſible he ſhould be happy, if both Parts are not eaſy. The Body is ſubject to Diſtempers and Pains; and while it labours under theſe, neither Wealth nor Greatneſs can give a Moment's Relief. The Soul is ſubject to Melancholy and Diſcontent; in which unhappy Condition, the Poſſeſſion of the World itſelf, would not raiſe the Spirits, or chear the Mind. But ſuppoſing further, that both Body and Soul were at Eaſe; even then, Riches will not yield us that Pleaſure that is imagined: For let us be ever ſo dextrous in finding out new Pleaſures, yet we ſhall be convinced, after all, that the Eye is never ſatisfied with ſeeing, nor the Ear with hearing; we are ſoon cloyed with theſe

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Things, and grow tired even of Variety itſelf.

2*dly*, THIS Perſon in the Parable was a Fool, becauſe he did not employ his Riches as he ought to have done.

IF we were to live only in this World, it might be right in us to follow the Advice of the Men of Pleaſure, *Let us eat and drink, for To-morrow we die.* But as we are to live for ever in another State, and as our Happineſs there depends upon the right Uſe of the Talents committed to us, it muſt be Madneſs in us to incur the Diſpleaſure of an Almighty Being, by a Miſmanagement of them.

IF we offend againſt the Laws of our Country, we may, by ſome Art or other, eſcape the Puniſhment we deſerve: But if we offend againſt God, we can by no Means fly from him. For if we climb up into Heaven, he is there; if we go down to Hell, he is there alſo; no Place can hide us from his Preſence, nor Death itſelf ſecure us from his Power. It would be happy for a wicked Man, if Death did put an End to him: But, alas! Dying is only changing the Place of his Abode, where the juſt Judgment of God will overtake him.

3*dly*, THIS Perſon in the Parable was juſtly called a *Fool*, becauſe he depended upon living many Years: *Soul, thou haſt much Goods laid up for many Years.* SERM. XVIII.

FOR even the natural Accidents of Life, that is, the many Chances to which we are liable every Moment, as we are living and organized Creatures, are ſo numerous, that ſome, whoſe Profeſſion hath obliged them to ſtudy the Structure and Machinery of the human Body, have been ſurpriſed that we live a Moment. Every Pain we feel hath a natural Tendency to deſtroy us; and even the very Things that give us our daily Nouriſhment and Support, lay a Foundation for all our Diſeaſes, and at laſt for Death itſelf.

FOR a Man, therefore, to promiſe himſelf long Life, is one of the greateſt Follies he can commit, and argues him to want either common Experience or common Senſe: For if we are to judge of the Uncertainty of Life from the Accidents that happen to other Men, the many ſudden and unexpected Deaths will teach us the Folly of increaſing our Fortunes, in Confidence of living many Years. A Man that

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looks back but five or ten Years of his Life, will find that many of his old Friends and Acquaintance have dropt off; and that others, who were continually fatiguing themſelves to have ſomething, as they called it, to comfort and ſupport them in their old Age, are gone off young; and their very Children too, for whom they were ſo induſtrious to provide: So fooliſh is it for Men to promiſe themſelves Length of Days.

Besides, it is Arrogance for a Man, who believes in God and his Providence, to indulge himſelf in an Aſſurance of living many Years; becauſe this is in a Manner to promiſe one's ſelf Life without God's Leave; it is putting his Power and Interpoſition out of the Queſtion, and giving ourſelves the Diſpoſal of that which of Right only belongs to him; which, as it tends to wreſt out of his Hand what he will never part with, ſo we may juſtly ſuſpect, that he will cut us off, as he did the Perſon in the Parable, in the Midſt of our Confidence and Vanity.

The Inferences that I ſhall draw from this Diſcourſe, are theſe that follow:

1. ARE Riches not an Evil of themſelves? Let us not make them ſuch to us by an irrational and wicked Uſe of them. Providence lodged them in our Hands to try our Fidelity; and the Reward for our juſt and honeſt Management of them, will be in Proportion to the Temptations we overcame. *Bleſſed*, ſays the Son of *Sirach*, *is the Rich that is found without Blemiſh; who hath been tried by Gold, and found perfect: Who might offend, and hath not offended; or done Evil, and hath not done it* [a]. SERM. XVIII.

2. WILL God accept our honeſt Induſtry in our different Employments, as a Service done unto him, as well as an Advantage to ourſelves and Families? Let us praiſe him for being thus kind to us, in making the doing Good to ourſelves a Part of our Religion towards him. If our Hearts begin to ſwell at the Increaſe of our Fortunes, and we be almoſt tempted to ſay, that it is by our own Management and Wiſdom, that we are grown rich; let us remember, that the Increaſe is from the Lord; that it is God who giveth us fruitful Seaſons, and hath alſo promiſed, that Seed-time and Harveſt, Cold and Heat, and

[a] *Eccluſ.* xxxi. 8—10.

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Summer and Winter, and Day and Night shall not cease. And if he did not keep a governing Hand, the Order of Nature would soon break, and the different Seasons run into each other. The Sun would not know his going down, nor the Moon her appointed Season.

3. ARE we allowed to enjoy the Fruits of our Labour? Let us, while our Hearts are filled with Food and Gladness, minister unto those who are in Necessity and Want. Nothing that we can do, is more agreeable to our Maker than Charity; and nothing makes us resemble him so much, as a constant Practice of it. *Moses* told the *Jews*, that the Poor should never cease out of the Land; whom God hath in his Providence appointed, in all Ages, to be, as it were, his Receivers, that we might have by them an Opportunity of shewing our Gratitude to him, in the generous Returns we make him, in our Assistance and Support of them. *Be merciful, therefore, according to thy Power: If thou hast much, give plentifully; if thou hast little, do thy Diligence, gladly to give of that little; for so gatherest thou thyself a good Reward in the Day of Necessity.*

4. ARE

4. Are Riches not to be depended upon? *Let not the rich Man glory in his Riches; but let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he underſtandeth me, ſaith the Lord.* If we ſettle our Affections, and place our Truſt in God, we ſhall never be diſappointed; which all the Riches in the World cannot do for us. The Friends and Aſſiſtants they procure, very often deceive us in the Day of Neceſſity; they are either treacherous, and will not help us; or, if they would, it may not be in their Power to do it. Our Pains and Diſeaſes are in the Power of God alone to cure; and he will either reſtore his faithful Servants from their Bed of Sickneſs and Affliction, or give them ſpiritual Strength to bear their Calamities with Patience and Reſignation. *Truſt not, therefore, in uncertain, unavailing Riches; but truſt in the living God: For did any ever truſt in the Lord, and was confounded? Or did any abide in his Fear, and was forſaken?* Serm. XVIII.

5. Was the rich Man a Fool, becauſe he did not make his Riches inſtrumental to the Saving of his Soul? Let thoſe who are rich, endeavour to avoid this

Error.

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Error. Happineſs does not conſiſt in the Abundance of the Things we poſſeſs: A little will procure us all the Satisfactions we want; the Overplus ſhould be employed in Acts of Mercy and Compaſſion. This is to imitate the Supreme Being, who is good, and will reward, with everlaſting Felicity, all thoſe whom he ſhall find thus doing.

Laſtly, WAS the rich Man a Fool for depending upon many Years? Let us ſeriouſly conſider the great Uncertainty of human Life; and, as much as poſſible, diſengage our Affections from the World: For we are only Pilgrims and Strangers here; Perſons who are on the Road for a better Place, and have juſt Time to refreſh ourſelves before we proceed in our Journey. Such Thoughts will make us live much more happy than the Generality of Men do. The Loſs of the moſt endearing Things will the leſs afflict us, when we reflect, that Death is a Debt which muſt once be paid to Nature, and is but what we all muſt, at one Time or other, undergo. Whereas a Man who never thinks on Death, muſt be very miſerable, when he finds it approaching; as the Son of *Sirach* ſays,

ſays, *O Death! how bitter is the Remembrance of thee, to a Man that liveth at Reſt in his Poſſeſſions; unto the Man that hath Proſperity in all Things*[a]*!* SERM. XVIII.

LET us, therefore, by frequent Meditation, make the Thoughts of Death familiar to us; and that will be a Means to make us ſo live, that we may find Favour in the Day of the Lord.

[a] *Eccluſ.* xli. 1.

SER-

SERMON XIX.

The DOCTRINE and MIRACLES of CHRIST, conducive to present and future HAPPINESS.

1 COR. i. 25.

The Foolishness of God is wiser than Men.

SERM. XIX. IN order to your right understanding of these Words, it is necessary to observe, that at the Time, when the Apostle wrote this Epistle to the *Corinthians*, *Greece* was, and had been for some Ages, the most learned Nation of the *Heathen* World; upon which Account the *Romans* themselves, though they were their Conquerors, sent their Youth to finish their Education, and learn their Language; which was not only superior to their own, but had in it the most valuable Books that were then

then in being. But among all the Sciences, the Study of Eloquence was had in ſo great an Eſteem, that no one was admired more than they, who were eminent for fine ſpeaking: And how much they excelled in that, is to be ſeen in thoſe Books, which have been preſerved amidſt ſo many Revolutions and Deſtructions of Empires, and eſcaped the Bigottry and Superſtition of the later Ages of Ignorance. SERM. XIX.

WHATEVER Opinions were broached among them, as, of all Nations, they were moſt famous and remarkable for the Variety of them, they were cloathed in correct and beautiful Language; and their Authors the more or leſs eſteemed, as they excelled in the Neatneſs and Perfection of Stile.

FINDING, therefore, that the Apoſtle, when he appeared among them, did not ſtudy to ſet off his Diſcourſes with thoſe Flowers of Rhetorick, they were ſo paſſionately fond of; nor preach, as he himſelf ſtiles it, *with the enticing Words of Man's Wiſdom*; *they deſpiſed* him as *illiterate*, and a *Barbarian*.

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BESIDES, the Doctrine, and the Perſon preached, was another Offence to thoſe conceited Men. The humble Virtues of our Bleſſed Saviour, his mean Life and ignominious Death, the conſtant Subject of the Apoſtle's Diſcourſe, was ridiculed and contemned; *it was to the Greeks, Fooliſhneſs:* For thoſe whom they idolized and adored, were Perſons that were eminent for the Deſtruction of Mankind, whoſe Virtues conſiſted in the Ruin and Devaſtation of Nations, and in the Murder and Butchery of their Fellow-Creatures. This was the Way that raiſed their Heroes into Gods, and made the People offer up Incenſe at their Altars. Humility and Patience under Sufferings, and Forgiveneſs for Injuries received, ſeemed to them mean and contemptible Virtues, unbecoming a great Man, and below the Dignity of a Hero.

THAT the Son of God ſhould leave his Father's Glory, and condeſcend to be born of a Woman;—that he ſhould undergo all the Infirmities of human Nature;—that he ſhould live miſerable, and at laſt ſuffer Death itſelf, for thoſe that ſo ill uſed him, they looked upon as abſurd and inconſiſtent;

ſiſtent; and eſteemed the Preachers of theſe Things to be no better than mad Men. But *the Fooliſhneſs of God is wiſer than Men.* SERM. XIX.

FROM which Words I will ſhew, that, though the *Gentiles*, who were ſo much conceited of their own Wiſdom and Philoſophy, deſpiſed the Doctrines of the Goſpel; yet, thoſe Doctrines, delivered by Chriſt and his Apoſtles, have given Men a clearer Notion of themſelves, and of their Duty to God, than all the Syſtems of the Philoſophers; which will appear by conſidering what is Man, and what is the Aim of all his Purſuits.

IF it be aſked, What is Man? We may reply, He is a rational Being; and, as ſuch, muſt deſire every Thing in Proportion, as it appears more or leſs conducive to his own Happineſs: And as he is a Compoſition of Soul and Body, which are confeſſedly of different Natures; ſo they muſt have different Employments and Pleaſures. The Body is not capable of thoſe Delights which are peculiar to the Soul, nor does the Soul ſhare in the Pleaſures the Body conceives, in the Gratification of its ſenſual

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ſual Appetites: And as the Soul is the moſt noble Part, ſo we ought to direct our chief Purſuit to compleat the Happineſs of that.

THIS ſeems to be a very natural Concluſion, which, yet, was not made by the antient Philoſophers, who could not directly determine, in what to place Man's ſupreme Happineſs. Thus, ſome of them placed the Happineſs of Man in Riches and Honour, in the Enjoyment of great Revenues, in the Splendor, Pomp, and Pageantry of the World; but found, when they were poſſeſſed of theſe Things, that the Soul was reſtleſs and uneaſy, and pined for ſomething more deſirable.

OTHERS, with more Wiſdom, placed the Happineſs of Man in the Perfection and Improvement of his Reaſon and Underſtanding: But theſe were as much diſappointed as the former; who, after all their Study and Labour to improve their Intellects, found themſelves only ſenſible of their greater Ignorance.

ANOTHER Sect, with a Conjecture that came the neareſt Truth, placed their Happineſs in that Pleaſure and Satisfaction, which

ariſeth

ariſeth in the Mind, from the Reflection of having acted well and agreeable to one's Conſcience: And yet, alas! theſe Men found to their Sorrow, that the Afflictions and Calamities of Life were too apt to overturn that Support they received from theſe moral Excellencies; nor were able to calm their Minds under the frightful Apprehenſions of an *Hereafter*. SERM. XIX.

THUS were the wiſeſt Men in the heathen World ignorant of the Way, that was to lead them to their true and greateſt Happineſs; and, by thus miſſing their Way at their firſt ſetting out, were ſtill farther and wider from the End they aimed at.

BUT this Ignorance our Bleſſed Saviour removed, and ſhewed the wandering World the Path that would bring them to their true Happineſs; by giving them a perfect Knowledge wherein that Happineſs conſiſted, and certain Rules how to obtain it.

TRUE Happineſs conſiſts in the Knowledge of God, and in contemplating his infinite Perfections, together with a Senſe of being in his Favour.

Now this Knowledge of God, the Goſpel hath delivered with the greateſt Cer-

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tainty; for though the visible Things of Creation do not only declare his Being, but his eternal Power and Goodness, yet Men were in a Manner ignorant of him: But this unknown God the Scriptures declare unto us, telling us, that there is no other God but one, who is the Maker of Heaven and Earth, and of all Things therein; whose Attributes or Perfections are so clearly expressed, as to give us no Manner of Doubt concerning them. Thus he is called, *the eternal King, who only hath Immortality; the incorruptible God*, whose Power is so great, that by his bare Word *the Heavens were made, and all the Host of them by the Breath of his Mouth*; who *spoke the Word, and it was done*; who *commanded, and it stood fast*: In whom, also, are hid all the Treasures of Wisdom, and whose *Goodness and Mercy are over all his Works*, both in giving all his Creatures, as well as Men, all Things richly to enjoy; and in *his Forbearance and Long-suffering towards us, that it might lead us to Repentance*; whose Justice will, with the greatest Impartiality, be distributed to all his Creatures: For, as he sees and knows all we do;

ſo, *in due Time, he will bring to Light the hidden Things of Darkneſs, and will make manifeſt the Counſels of the Heart.* Every Man ſhall receive from him his juſt Deſerts; for he is no Reſpecter of Perſons. SERM. XIX.

A CONTEMPLATION on ſuch Perfections, muſt afford good Men the moſt ſolid Satisfaction, which can be equalled by nothing but in the Pleaſure that a Senſe of God's Favour may raiſe in them. And how we may have this, the ſame Scripture informs us, to wit, by acting according to the Rules that he hath preſcribed to us: *Be ye perfect, even as your heavenly Father is perfect:* Which, though not to be underſtood in the largeſt Senſe of the Expreſſion, it being impoſſible for any Creature to be as perfect as God, yet we are obliged to imitate him as far as we can; particularly, in the Perfections of his Goodneſs, Mercy, Patience, Juſtice, and Truth; which Imitation will certainly make us as happy as we can be in this World, and is ſuch an Happineſs as cannot be taken away from us.

AND to perform all this, we have the greateſt Encouragement and Aſſiſtance thro'

SERM. XIX. the *Doctrine*, the *Life*, the *Miracles*, and the *Death* and *Reſurrection* of our Bleſſed Saviour.

1. THE Doctrine which our Saviour delivered, as it aims at the greateſt *Purity*, ſo it is expreſſed with the greateſt *Perſpicuity*. No one that reads his Sermon upon the *Mount*, or the other Inſtructions that are interſperſed throughout his whole Hiſtory, and the Writings of his Apoſtles, but may learn what is required from him; *ſpiritual Adoration, Purity and Integrity of Heart, Unblameableneſs of Life and Converſation, a Conſcience void of Offence, both towards God and Man:* Theſe are frequently inculcated throughout the *New Teſtament*. And, leſt we might be inclined to believe theſe Things impracticable,

2. He hath given, in his *Life*, an Example of Obedience to the Will of God, both in *doing* and *Suffering*; an Example of *Humility and Purity, and Meekneſs of Spirit:* Which is an Advantage, that was not afforded either to *Jews* or *Heathens*; and withal a very great one: For it removes all Doubts that might have riſen about the Interpretation of his Commands, by

by ſhewing us the Meaning in their Performance; and it ſtrengthens us againſt all Difficulties that might have appeared therein, by ſhewing us that Performance accompliſhed by one, *who was in all Things made like unto us, and ſubject unto the ſame Infirmities as ourſelves, yet without Sin.* And, SERM. XIX.

3. BY the *Miracles* of our Saviour, we more eaſily acquieſce in, and receive the Doctrine. For *without Signs and Wonders, Men would not aſſent to it.* But *when they ſaw the Miracles which he did, they believed in him, and concluded, that he was a Teacher ſent from God; becauſe,* they ſaid, *no Man could do ſuch Things, except God was with him.* Thus *God approved him unto the World, by Miracles, and Wonders, and Signs, which he wrought among them:* And that gave him Credit and Authority above other Doctors, and added an extraordinary Power to his Words. But,

4. THE greateſt Encouragement lies in that clear Evidence that Chriſt has given us of a *future Life*, in which we are to expect either *Rewards* or *Puniſhments*, anſwerable to our Conduct in this. An Advantage above all the Diſcoveries of natural

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Light, which gave but weak and imperfect Glimmerings of that Truth, which Revelation hath cleared up beyond all Poſſibility of doubting; declaring, that *Chriſt's Kingdom was not of this World*; exhorting us to *lay up Treaſure in Heaven*, where it ſhould be ſecure and *incorruptible*; ſhewing us, that the *Means* of getting an *Entrance* there, was by the Practice of thoſe Virtues that Chriſt had required; and that *thoſe who did Good*, ſhould, *at the laſt Day*, *come forth unto the Reſurrection of Life*; *but thoſe that did Evil*, *unto the Reſurrection of Damnation*.

AND as this Belief was of the greateſt Importance, Chriſt did not only confirm it, by that general Credit, which his other Miracles gave to his Word; but he alſo foretold both his own Death, and Reſurrection; and after having ſuffered the one, he accompliſhed the other: That ſo he might, by a peculiar Miracle, adapted to the very Caſe, prove the Truth of this Doctrine, even by ocular Demonſtration. Thus it is, that Life and Immortality was brought to Light by him, who was looked upon with ſuch Contempt, by the conceited

ceited *Greeks*; and who, yet, discovered more than they, with all their Wisdom, ever thought on. SERM. XIX.

THE good Man may now go on undaunted in his Course of Virtue, having, as it were, Heaven open to him, and Jesus Christ standing at the right Hand of God; being certain of a future Existence, he may despise the Treasures of this World, as below his Thoughts, and bear all the ill Treatment of wicked and perverse Men, knowing that *these light Afflictions will work for him, a more eternal Weight of Glory.*

THUS much does the Knowledge of Jesus Christ do for us; it gives us the clearest Notions of our Duty, and the greatest Encouragement to perform it; it is every Way calculated to make us happy, both in relation to this World, by teaching us, how we may live agreeably in our different Stations; and in relation to our future State, by offering us a Reward that is equal to our Wishes, and can only satisfy our vast Desires.

AS, therefore, we are so happy as to know the christian Doctrines, let our Practice be in Proportion to our Knowledge:

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I ſay, as we are ſo happy, to know the chriſtian Doctrines; for it is a very great Advantage, that we have the Will of God delivered to us, and ſuch Rules given us, as, if followed, muſt bring us to everlaſting Life. The *Heathen* World, for all their Boaſt of Wiſdom, were ignorant of many Things, in Compariſon of us who enjoy the Light of the Goſpel: They might be ſaid not to have known their Lord's Will, having but an obſcure and uncertain Knowledge of the great Truths, that are revealed to us; and, being without thoſe Motives and Encouragements to a good Life, that we are acquainted with: And therefore we are obliged particularly to do, what we thus know to be our Duty. We are aſſured, that it is the Command of the great Lord and Sovereign of the World, who hath the juſteſt Right to our Obedience, and will certainly puniſh us, if we neglect to give him it.

THEY, indeed, may have ſome Excuſe, who can plead a real Ignorance of their Lord's Will; but we, who have theſe Things ſo plainly revealed to us, can ſay nothing

for

for ourſelves, or offer any Thing in our Defence, why Sentence ſhould not be paſſed upon us: If we are diſobedient to God's Laws, it can proceed from nothing but Obſtinacy and Contempt; and we can expect no Forgiveneſs, after ſuch an Affront done to the Divine Majeſty. SERM. XIX.

THIS I ſpeak of Chriſtians in general; but if we conſider ourſelves, we, of all People, are the moſt inexcuſable, becauſe we have more Opportunities and Advantages, than any other Chriſtian Nation, of knowing our Duty; we have the Holy Scriptures permitted us to read, and it will be our Fault if we do not learn our Duty; or, knowing it, if we do not practiſe accordingly. Every Degree of Knowledge, that we have, will be an Aggravation of our Guilt; for the Light we have, will be reckoned to us, as ſo many Talents that we muſt account for: For, *unto whom much is given, of him much ſhall be required; and to whom he hath committed much, of him will he aſk the more.* A Neglect in a Chriſtian, will hardly admit of any Excuſe, becauſe we know what we ought to do; and

if

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if we do it not, it would have *been better for us not to have known the Way of Righteouſneſs, than, after we have known it, to turn from the holy Commandment delivered unto us.* This will aggravate our Condemnation to the higheſt Degree: Let, therefore, the Light that is in us, be our Guide and Director; let us practiſe what we are convinced is our Duty, and then we may *have Confidence towards God.*

LET the Holineſs and Purity of the Divine Nature, manifeſted to us in his ſacred Writings, urge us on to a ſincere Imitation of them: Let us *purify ourſelves from all Filthineſs of the Fleſh, and preſent our Bodies a living Sacrifice, holy, and acceptable to God*; for, *becauſe of thoſe Things cometh his Wrath upon the Children of Diſobedience.* God would not forgive even the *Heathens*, who knew not his Will, the Sins of Uncleanneſs; much more will he puniſh Chriſtians, whom he *hath called unto Holineſs*, if they commit ſuch Things. For, *it is his Will*, ſaith the Apoſtle, *that every one of us may know how to poſſeſs himſelf in Sanctification and Honour; not in the Luſt*

of

of Concupiſcence, even as the Gentiles, which know not God: Becauſe *he is the Avenger of all ſuch.* SERM. XIX.

LET the Love and Goodneſs of God, ſhewn to us in ſending his only begotten Son into the World to redeem us, and teach us our Duty to him, make us receive with Meekneſs the engrafted Word: And, inſtead of cavilling at the Evidences, which God hath been pleaſed to give us, to confirm the Truth of it, let us obey his Will, and we ſhall ſoon know, whether the Doctrine is from him: For it is the Prophaneneſs and Wickedneſs of Mens Lives, that make Men ſo willing to become Infidels; for, did they impartially conſider the Evidence for the Chriſtian Religion, the Proofs of the Truth and Divinity of it are ſo convincing, that they muſt believe it. Therefore, *we* ſhould *take care, leſt there* ſhould *be in us* any ſuch *evil Heart of Unbelief*; and by all Means ſubdue our wicked and corrupt Affections, *leſt we ſhould be hardened through the Deceitfulneſs of Sin.*

IN a Word, Let all of us ſo behave, in that Station of Life, in which it hath pleaſed

God

SERM. XIX. God to place us, that our Conduct may promote his Glory, and our own Happineſs.

LET thoſe who are rich, abound in Acts of Mercy and Charity; to the Practice of which, not only Reaſon, but our Religion obligeth us, in Imitation of that Divine Being, whoſe Kindneſs perpetually extends itſelf over all his Works, and in Obedience to his Commands, who *maketh his Sun to riſe on the Evil and the Good, and ſendeth Rain on the Juſt and on the Unjuſt.*

LET the Poor and Miſerable illuſtrate their Afflictions, by a virtuous Patience and pious Contentment; remembering, that Afflictions are oftner Signs of God's Affection for, than Anger againſt us; that they improve our Virtues; and that we may, with our Bleſſed Saviour, if we make a right Uſe of them, *be made perfect through Sufferings.*

LET the Wiſe and Learned ſtudy to ſpread the Truth, by a clear and rational Explanation of it to thoſe, who want their Inſtructions: And,

LET thoſe, who are ignorant and unlearned, hold faſt the Profeſſion of thoſe plain

plain Truths they are acquainted with, and *live ſoberly, and righteouſly, and godly in this preſent World*; being aſſured, that *God hath appointed a Day, in the which he will judge the World in Righteouſneſs.* SERM. XIX.

BEFORE whoſe aweful Tribunal, that we may all be able to give a good Account of ourſelves, God of his infinite Mercy grant. *Amen.*

SER-

SERMON XX.

Hearing and Keeping the WORD of GOD, a Means of present Peace and future Glory.

LUKE xi. 28.

Bleſſed are they that hear the Word of God, and keep it.

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BEFORE I diſcourſe on theſe Words, it will not be improper to go back to the Beginning of this Chapter, and paraphraſe the Contents of it; that you may the better underſtand their Meaning, and the Reaſon of their being ſpoken.

OUR Bleſſed Saviour, in the firſt Part of this Chapter, having taught his Diſciples how to pray, encourages them to a conſtant Practice of it, by two very ſtrong and apt Similitudes: The firſt, of a Man's obtaining of his Friend three Loaves at Midnight,

Midnight, by his great Importunity; the second, of a Father's not denying the Petition of his Children for Bread: And from thence concludes, that if a Man will grant his Friend ſuch a Petition, tho' aſked at ſuch an unſeaſonable Time of Night, becauſe of his Importunity; and the Father, from the Tenderneſs and Affection of a Parent, will not deny his Children Bread, much leſs give them any Thing that would do them Hurt; will not God, who is the real Father of us all, and hath more Affection for us, and more Power to do us good, than our earthly Parents have, give us every Thing that he knoweth to be fit and convenient for us? SERM. XX.

HAVING thus inſtructed his Diſciples, and given them a Form of Prayer, to addreſs themſelves in a proper Manner to God; as he was always taking hold of every Opportunity to do good, and to do the Work of him that ſent him; ſo we immediately find him [a] diſpoſſeſſing a Man of an evil Spirit, that by the Malignity of his Power, had taken from him the Faculty of ſpeaking: But no ſooner was the

[a] *Luke* xi. 14.

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the Dæmon driven out of the Man, than he ſpoke, to the great Admiration and Aſtoniſhment of the People. One would have thought, ſuch an Inſtance of divine Power would naturally have made every one preſent conclude, that ſuch a Perſon muſt come from God, who could do ſuch wonderful and beneficent Works; and have attended to what he ſhould deliver, as a Perſon having a divine Miſſion. But inſtead of this, we find ſome of the Multitude, who were of the *Phariſees*, blaſphemouſly imputing this Miracle of our Saviour's to a Confederacy with *Beelzebub*, the Prince of the Devils. To this ſhocking and abſurd Imputation our Saviour replies, That howſoever wicked the Devil was, yet he was too wiſe and politick to deſtroy his own Power, as ſuch a fooliſh Proceeding would certainly do; becauſe the Doctrine that I teach, is an Enemy to the Power and Intereſt of his Kingdom. But upon Suppoſition that I do theſe wonderful Works by *Beelzebub*, and caſt out Devils by his Leave; let me aſk you, *by whom do your Sons*, who exorcize them in the Name of the ſame God, by whoſe Power

I profeſs to do it, *caſt them out?* Now, if you allow that they do this by the Power of God, this very Judgment will condemn you, if you aſcribe the ſame Thing done by me to the Power and Aſſiſtance of the Devil. But if I, who profeſs myſelf to be the *Meſſias, with the Finger of God caſt out Devils*, you have no Reaſon but to conclude, that *the Kingdom of God*, ſpoken of by the Prophet *Daniel, is come unto you:* For if I was not ſuperior to *Satan*, by the Power of God reſiding in me, I could not thus overcome him; and as my overcoming him in this Manner proves my Miſſion, you, who do not ſide and join with me to compleat the Deſtruction of the Power of *Satan*, and to bring Men into the Kingdom of God, do as much as lieth in you, to ſupport the Kingdom of *Satan:* And if you thus obſtinately continue to ſide with him againſt me, who have thus ejected him out of you, I compare you to a Man, out of whom an unclean Spirit was caſt, who afterwards going *thro' dry Places*, not watered as yet by the Word of God preached unto them, *ſeeking Reſt and finding none, ſaith, I will return to my Houſe, whence I* SERM. XX.

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came out; and when he cometh, he findeth it swept and garnished: Then goeth he, and taketh to him seven other Spirits more wicked than himself; and they enter in, and dwell there; and the last State of that Man is worse than the first. Thus also will it be with you: *Satan*, ejected by me, finding, no where else, Persons so fitted to receive him, will return and take durable Possession of you, and render you seven Times more the Children of *Satan* than ye were before.

WHEN our Blessed Saviour had said these Things, *a certain Woman*, full of Ecstasy and Pleasure, at his rational and wise Discourse, *lifted up her Voice, and said, Blessed is the Womb, that bare thee; and the Paps that thou hast sucked:* A very natural and affecting Expression, that flowed from that unspeakable Pleasure, that Mothers feel in that agreeable Reflection of having good and worthy Children. To whom our Saviour replied, that, whatsoever Blessedness might arise to his Mother from conceiving and bringing him into the World, yet a pious Hearing of the Word of God, joined with a sincere Endeavour to do his Will, would make any one more blessed,

than

than the Privilege and Honour of being his Mother would make her; unleſs ſhe, as well as they, believed, and obeyed his Word. For *bleſſed*, only, *are they, that hear the Word of God and keep it.* SERM. XX.

By the Word *Bleſſed*, in this Paſſage, we are to underſtand, that future Happineſs; that is to be the Reward of a faithful Continuance in well-doing to the End of our Lives; and in this Senſe of the Word, no one can be bleſſed, but ſuch as perſevere in their Duty. And that none might preſume upon any Privilege of Exemption, Chriſt tells us, that even his Mother herſelf, howſoever near or dear ſhe was to him, ſhould not be received into everlaſting Happineſs, unleſs ſhe made her Life as illuſtrious by her Piety and Virtue, as ſhe was ſuppoſed to be honoured, in bearing the Son of Man: An Intimation ſufficient to ſhew the Folly of paying divine Honour to *her*, whom our Saviour ſets upon the Level with her Fellow-Creatures; and, as if he foreſaw the ſuperſtitious Worſhip that would in after Ages be paid her, ſeems, on Purpoſe, on an Occaſion given, to diminiſh her Relation to him, by ſaying, that *whoſoever*

SERM. XX. *ſhall do the Will of my Father which is in Heaven, the ſame is my Brother, my Siſter, and Mother.*

BUT in diſcourſing upon this Paſſage, I ſhall conſider it in a larger View, and ſhew, that nothing but the Practice of Virtue and Religion can make us happy, either *here*, or *hereafter*.

MANY and various are the Paths, that Mankind purſue to attain what they eſteem Happineſs; and, in the Purſuit of it, rove thro' whole Nature to find what they ſo earneſtly deſire. Thus ſome, imagining it to be placed in temporal Poſſeſſions, are continually employed, by all Manner of Arts and Subtleties, in amaſſing Wealth to compaſs their Wiſh. Others place it in the Gratification of the Senſes, in indulging their Paſſions and Appetites; and ſpend their Lives and Strength, in ſeeking freſh Objects for their Luſts. A third Sort paint it, in their heated Imaginations, in falſe Glory, and fantaſtick Honour: While the vulgar and low Souls grovel after it in a baſe revengeful Diſpoſition, or in a ſenſeleſs Revelling and beaſtial Drunkenneſs.

THUS are the Generality of Mankind employed in their Search after Happineſs, and are certain to find themſelves diſappointed. For how can Happineſs be aſſured to us by temporal Poſſeſſions, when they themſelves are liable to ſo many Accidents; and, even in Poſſeſſion, give us many ſecret Anxieties? And what real Pleaſure can be expected from ſenſual Enjoyments, which depend upon the preſent Flow of Spirits, and leave upon the Mind ſo much Regret and Uneaſineſs? Or what true Satisfaction can be found in the Honours of the World, which are generally purchaſed with that, which is more valuable than all that the World itſelf can give us? SERM. XX.

As to the low, mean Pleaſures of rioting and Diſſoluteneſs, they ſoon end in Feebleneſs and Remorſe; for *the End of ſuch Mirth is Heavineſs.*

IT is Religion alone, tho' unjuſtly looked upon by too many as an Enemy to Chearfulneſs and good Humour, that can make us truly happy: It is from that Source only, that we can taſte real Delight; for it is ſo far from being a Foe to Pleaſure, that it obliges us to be joyful; and it is impoſſible

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for a good Man not to be ſo. Look upon ſuch a Perſon, and you will find him the moſt chearful Creature in the World, always in a good Humour, his Spirits briſk, his Mind eaſy, and his Countenance ſerene and lively; and indeed, how can it be otherwiſe? For is it poſſible for a Man who is at Peace with his Maker, at Amity with the World, and in Friendſhip with his own Mind, not to be eaſy and chearful? But to be more particular: The religious Man hath an inexhauſtible Fountain of good to depend upon; he hath a free Acceſs, by his Prayers, to God, *in whoſe Preſence there is Fulneſs of Joy, and at whoſe right Hand there are Pleaſures for evermore.* He relies with a pious Confidence on his good and friendly Providence, being guarded by his Almighty Power and Wiſdom. He fears no Evil, being defended by the Shadow of the Almighty's Wings; and whoſe Refuge is in the Lord his God. He is under no Suſpicions, or ſuperſtitious Terrors, being conſcious of his own upright Intentions, and confident of God's Readineſs to accept his ſincere Endeavours to fulfil his Will.

As for the Things of this World, they are below his Ambition; he is not at all solicitous about them, seeing nothing here worth contending for; and thereby he keeps his Mind free from those boisterous Passions, that would otherwise ruffle and disturb his Peace: He is contented in the Condition God hath been pleased to allot him, doing the Duty and Business of his Station chearfully, being assured that all Things will work together for his Good. SERM. XX.

FOR these Reasons, the good Christian must be blessed, or happy. But further:

WHEN by Faith he reflects on the Goodness of God in the Creation of the World, and the rich Provision he hath made for the Support and Accommodation of every Creature in it, this Contemplation gives him a most desirable Pleasure; and indeed, it must be very comfortable to believe, that God is the great Governor and Protector of the World, that he directs all Things to their proper Ends and Uses, and that he himself is under his Care and Protection; as it must also be to believe, that Christ, by his meritorious Obedience and Passion, hath appeased the Wrath of God, and rescued his Soul from the Do-

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minion of Sin and *Satan*. What Satisfaction alſo muſt it be to be aſſured, that, by the Reſurrection of Jeſus Chriſt, his Soul and Body ſhall be united again, and be rewarded with everlaſting Happineſs?

How comfortable, likewiſe, muſt it be to a good Chriſtian, to be ſatisfied, that God's Arms are always open to receive him, kindly inviting him with the moſt favourable Overtures of Mercy? That he is deſirous to ſhew him Favour, and will gladly accept his Repentance? How pleaſing muſt the Senſe be to him, of having an Advocate with the Father, if he ſincerely aſks his Mediation? That *there is no Condemnation to them which are in Chriſt Jeſus, who walk not after the Fleſh, but after the Spirit?*

How happy is it, that the good Chriſtian can diſburden all his Cares and Fears upon God, being aſſured that he ſhall be delivered, by his Aſſiſtance, from every Thing that may diſcompoſe and fret him? And how delightful muſt his Hope be, that God, upon his ſincere Endeavours to do his Duty, will render to him the Wages of Righteouſneſs; and that, if his Heart condemn him not, his Hope is founded on a Rock?

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IF it be a Pleaſure to any of us, that we ſtand a good Chance to ſucceed to a very ample Fortune; how much more deſirable muſt it be to a good Chriſtian, to be certain, that he hath *a lively Hope of an Inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reſerved in Heaven for him?* The Eſtates that we may become Heirs to here, in Poſſeſſion, do not give us the Pleaſure that we imagined to receive from them: A thouſand unforeſeen Accidents baulk our Expectations; our Health and Vigour become impaired, either by Age or Diſtempers; or our Minds grow ſick, and nauſeate thoſe Delights, that we thought to procure with them. A Man muſt have made but little Obſervation, that cannot confirm the Truth of this from his own Experience; nay, every one of us is, in ſome Degree, a Proof of the Truth of it ourſelves: For, even the beſt Men, who are certainly more qualified for enjoying the Things of this World, and who, in Truth, do enjoy them with more ſincere Delight than others do, yet meet, by the unavoidable Condition of human Life,

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with many Rubs, that render them not so happy as they otherwiſe would be.——But in the other World, the Inheritance, that good Men ſhall become Heirs to, will be exempted from all theſe Inconveniences; for neither Age will render them incapable of enjoying it, nor Diſtempers corrupt or break the continued Fruition of Happineſs: For though we do not directly know *what God hath prepared for them that love him*; yet thoſe Expreſſions, which the Scriptures make uſe of to ſet forth the Bleſſedneſs of that State, are ſuch as repreſent it under the higheſt Characters, of *Fulneſs of Joy*, and *Pleaſures for evermore*. We are told, that they who ſhall be thought worthy of that Kingdom, *ſhall hunger no more, neither thirſt any more; neither ſhall the Sun light on them, nor any Heat: For God ſhall wipe away all Tears from their Eyes, and there ſhall be no more Death, neither Sorrow nor Crying; neither ſhall there be any more Pain, for the former Things are paſſed away.*

THIS is Part of the Bleſſedneſs, that thoſe Men enjoy, both in this World and the

the next, who ſincerely *hear the Word of God and keep it.* SERM. XX.

WHAT remains now, is to make an Application or two, and ſo conclude.

1*ſt*, WITH Regard to this Life.—What wiſe Man would not endeavour to be as good as poſſible, when he conſiders how much he is ſure to reap by being ſo? For if he reſpects his *Health*, there is no Method ſo certain to preſerve it, as thoſe Rules that Religion has preſcribed to direct his Behaviour by.

2*dly*, IF he loves *Reputation* and *Honour*, he can never find them ſo eaſily, and ſecure them ſo certainly, as by the Practice of Piety and Virtue. There is ſuch an Amiableneſs in the Character of a good Man, that he never appears, either in Publick or in Converſation, but Men ſhew a viſible Reſpect and Regard for him; their Eyes ſparkle Eſteem, and their Countenances expreſs their inward Satisfaction: Every one is forward to let him ſee, how they value and reſpect him; and even bad Men cannot but love and revere him, be-

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cauſe of the Benefits and Advantages they receive from ſuch Men as he is.

3*dly*, If he would have Content of Mind, and Peace of Conſcience; by being good is the only Way he can poſſibly obtain it.——Every other Method Men take to purchaſe it, is Labour loſt; and they are ſure to find themſelves diſappointed, who ſeek for it in any Thing elſe: For neither *Health*, *Riches*, *Power*, *Wit*, or *Learning*, can procure it. Peace of Mind can only be acquired from Heaven, and Piety is the only Thing that can bring it down thence for us. The Things of this World give us but imperfect Delight; it is from Piety alone that we enjoy laſting Pleaſure, and whoſoever is really a good Man, will be always happy, let the World go as it pleaſes: For what ſignify all the Frowns of the World, to a Man that is aſſured of the Favour of God? Or what Comforts can the Friendſhips of Men adminiſter to a Man, who feels that all is not well within him? It is from a Conſciouſneſs of his Integrity alone, that he is happy; and if he wants that *inward Peace*, it is

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no Matter what the World thinks of him; *for the Heart feels for itſelf.*

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WITH regard to the next World.—— No one but the good Man can be happy; not only becauſe God hath promiſed, that he will reward none but good Men, but from the Nature of that Happineſs they are to enjoy; which is ſuch as bad Men can receive no Satisfaction in the Fruition of: For what Happineſs can the *Senſualiſt* or the *Malicious* receive in the Society of the *Spirits of juſt Men made perfect?* Thoſe Men, who take no Pleaſure in any Thing but carnal Delights, can never be fit Company for ſpiritual and refined Minds. And thoſe malicious Tempers, whoſe Delight is in doing Miſchief, can never feel any Comfort in the Pleaſures of Goodneſs and Holineſs.

HATH God therefore promiſed, that no one but the good Man ſhall enter into his Reſt? And is the Happineſs of Heaven ſuch, that none but the Good can enjoy it? Let us qualify ourſelves, by a Life of Piety and Holineſs, to become Partakers of what is laid up for the Righteous: And let the Happineſs,

SERM. XX. Happineſs, that we now taſte, in the preſent Performance of our Duty, be conſidered as an Earneſt of thoſe inexpreſſible Pleaſures, which are to be the Reward of our faithful Continuance in well-doing.

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SERMON XXI.

On CONTENTEDNESS.

PART I.

PHILIPP. iv. 11.

I have learned, in whatſoever State I am, therewith to be content.

THESE Words of St. *Paul* recommend to us a Virtue, which of all others moſt naturally tends to promote our Happineſs, by ſmoothing the rugged and troubleſome Paths of Life, and making the Miſeries, that Men labour under, much leſs painful and afflicting. SERM. XXI.

THE Word, which we in our *Tranſlation* render *Content*, may be conſtrued *Self-ſufficient*; not that the Apoſtle thereby meant, that he was independent on God, but that he had learned not to deſire or wiſh for any

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any Thing more, than what God in his Goodneſs had bleſſed him with; that he had brought his Thoughts and Circumſtances on a Level, and chearfully ſubmitted to do the Duties of his preſent Condition.

This Virtue of Contentedneſs may be practiſed in all Conditions of Life, in the higheſt as well as the loweſt Station in the World; nay, Greatneſs is as often as uneaſy as Poverty, and the ſame Arguments, that perſuade to the Practice of Contentedneſs, will ſuit the Rich as well as the Poor. *I know*, ſays St. *Paul*, *both how to be abaſed, and I know how to abound; every where, and in all Things, I am inſtructed, both to be full, and to be hungry, both to abound, and to ſuffer Need*[a].

But, ſince Adverſity and Poverty have the ſtrongeſt Influence in diſturbing our Minds, the Virtue of Contentedneſs is moſt neceſſary to be recommended in ſuch melancholy Situations, as that, which can only ſupport us under the Weight of the Affliction: And therefore, I ſhall particularly addreſs myſelf to ſuch as are in Straits, and offer

[a] *Philipp.* iv. 12.

offer ſuch Directions and Perſuaſions, as are proper to compleat this Virtue in us. SERM. XXI.

I. The Directions I ſhall offer, are the following.

1ſt. It is neceſſary, let our Condition be what it will, that we believe, that it is God's good Pleaſure, that ſuch and ſuch Things befal us.

Men are apt, when they are in Misfortunes, and oppreſſed in the World, to exclaim againſt Fortune, and to curſe their unlucky Stars: Whereas they ought to reflect, that *Affliction cometh not forth out of the Duſt, neither doth Trouble ſpring out of the Ground*; that it is God's Pleaſure, Things ſhould be ſo; and ſuch Thoughts will naturally incline them, not to entertain any ill Notions of God, as if he took a Delight in grieving them, or was not wiſe in ordering Things in ſuch Sort as they are. This I mention, becauſe Men are very ready to imagine, that Things would have been much wiſer contrived, had they proſpered in the World: Whereas, whatever God ſuffers to be, is certainly beſt; for, *he is righteous in all his Ways,*

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and holy in all his Works: He does nothing out of ill Nature; and that ſhould ſatisfy us, when we are afflicted, that the Affliction is deſigned for our Good, and is to be looked upon no otherwiſe, than as a fatherly Correction, or friendly Rebuke, to make us good and happy. And this will carry us on to believe, that our preſent Condition, whatſoever it may be, is beſt, when all Things are rightly conſidered: For God is good to all; he is our Father; and all that he aims at, is the Good and Happineſs of his Children: He is thoroughly acquainted with our different Capacities, and he kindly aſſigns us ſuch a Station, as is moſt proper for us to be in. And whenever we have brought ourſelves to this Perſuaſion of Mind, we ſhall ſubmit to the moſt grievous Afflictions of Life with Patience and Submiſſion, ſaying, with our Bleſſed Saviour, *Let not my Will, but thine be done.*

We ſhould utter no Murmuring againſt God or his Providence, or endeavour to throw off the Yoke he has laid upon us: No Exceſs of Paſſion ſhould diſturb or inflame our Souls, but we ſhould ſubmit with Calmneſs to the worſt Events, conſidering whence

whence they come, and for what Good they are designed. SERM. XXI.

Instead of being restive under Afflictions, we should rely upon God for the Removal of them; considering, that *God knoweth how to rescue the Godly out of Tribulation*; and *that he is faithful, and will not suffer us to be tempted above what we are able; but will, with the Temptation, also make a Way to escape, that we may be able to bear it.*

No Adversities whatsoever should enervate our Courage, or weaken our Resolution: As long as God shall please to chastise us, we should *never be weary of his Correction*, or think that he is tedious in delivering us from the Misery of it.

We should humble ourselves under the mighty Hand of God, as Persons sensible of our own Unworthiness, and of our actual Transgressions against him. If we do not behave in this Manner, we can never be said to be content; because such a Behaviour as this, is inseparable from Contentedness. But,

2*dly*, Though God in his Providence hath been pleased to put us low in the World,

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we must not grudge at, or envy the Prosperity of others, that are above us; because it is inconsistent with Contentedness to envy other Mens Happiness, as well as a Sin to do so.

I own, it is very natural to be impatient and froward in Adversity, particularly when we find Men, whom we have infinitely obliged by many former Favours, ungratefully refusing their Assistance; but nothing should render us unkindly disposed toward the World, because we may have been misused by them; since our Saviour hath bid us pray for our Enemies, and we are advised to *fret not* ourselves *in any wise to do Evil.* Again,

3*dly*, If we would be content, it is necessary that we confine our Desires, otherwise we shall never be satisfied, let our Circumstances be ever so great. Our Condition and our Minds must be always on the Square, and then we may be sure of being happy.

If we are rich, let us be generous to those that want, and deserve our Assistance; for, if we do not make a proper Use of our Riches, they will only add to our Cares

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and Suſpicions; we ſhall become covetous and anxious after more, and, through an unreaſonable Deſire of enlarging our Sum, loſe all the real Pleaſure that might be procured by a rational Uſe of them. SERM. XXI.

If we are poor, we ſhould be diligent and careful, induſtrious and provident in our Station; chearful under the Hardſhips we may labour with; otherwiſe we ſhall be extremely miſerable.

These are the Diſpoſitions of Mind, that are neceſſary to make us content in our ſeveral Stations: And, where ſuch Diſpoſitions are, you will never hear any unſeemly Expreſſions, or unjuſt Reflections againſt God, and his Providence, becauſe they may not be ſo happy as they could deſire. Whatſoever they may ſuffer, they will *never charge God fooliſhly*, or call in queſtion his Juſtice or Goodneſs upon their Accounts. They think it their Duty to forbear the leaſt Murmuring or Complaint againſt Providence; they will be dumb and open not their Mouths, becauſe they know it is the Lord's Doing, one, that cannot do a harſh or cruel Thing; and therefore they are ſatisfied: Nay, inſtead

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ſtead of complaining, they will acknowledge his Wiſdom and Goodneſs in his Dealings with them, and will praiſe and bleſs him, for what hath befallen them.

Though they may be ever ſo poor, they will purſue no wicked Courſes to better their Condition; but rather bear the Afflictions, than endeavour to remove them by ſuch unjuſtifiable Methods. They will rather chuſe to lie under Diſgrace and Contempt, than, by vile and baſe Compliances, acquire the Reſpect and Favour of Men. In the Midſt of their Adverſity they are chearfully doing their preſent Duty, and putting *their Truſt in the Lord*, and *committing the Keeping of their Souls to him, in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.*

In theſe, and ſuch like Things, conſiſts the *Nature of Contentedneſs.*

II. I come, in the next Place, to propoſe ſome Conſiderations, that may perſuade you to be content. And, *firſt*, in relation to God:

1*ſt*, If we be not content, we are very *unjuſt*. For, as God is the Creator, Lord, and Preſerver of all Things, it is his natural Right

and Prerogative to assign to every Man, that Station in the World, which he thinks proper and convenient. And as he is infinitely wise and good, it is also just to own, that he does what is wisest and best, in this Disposition. But the Man that murmurs at God's Disposal of him, disputes his Right, and impeaches his Wisdom and Goodness in the Exercise of it. Complaining at our Lot insinuates, that we think not Things ordered right, that they would be better and wiser contrived, if we were to dispose of them; it implies, that if we were able, we would extort this Right out of God's Hands, and exercise it according to our own Fancy and Humour. This Uneasiness, also, at our Lot, does in Effect charge God with Iniquity in the Disposal of Things; for if we thought, that he did what was just, we should think it unreasonable to complain against him. SERM. XXI.

2dly, Such Behaviour, also, is the greatest Affront, that can possibly be offered to God: It is nothing less, than to question his Veracity and Truth; for, if we believed that God, who hath promised to take care of us, and hath declared, that he will

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never forſake us, is true and faithful in his Sayings, we ſhould never be diſcontented, for Fear of any Want.

The leaſt that can be meant by ſuch Uneaſineſs, is, that we ſuſpect God to be either not willing, or not able to help us; and ſuch Suſpicions are very unworthy of God, and greatly injurious to him. But,

3*dly*, Such Deportment argues very great Ingratitude. For, as God has thro' his Bounty and Goodneſs given us freely all the common Bleſſings of Life, we ought to be thankful for theſe; and not complain, that we have not more than he hath been pleaſed to give us. He hath beſtowed upon us innumerable and ineſtimable Goods: He hath made us capable of enjoying the greateſt Happineſs; by his *Wiſdom* he offereth to inſtruct and guide us; by his *Power*, to protect and guard us; by his *Fulneſs*, to ſupply our Wants; and by his *Goodneſs*, to comfort us on all Occaſions. And ſhall we receive ſo much Good at the bountiful Hand of God, and yet fret, like fooliſh Children, becauſe ſome trifling Toy and Plaything is denied them; when, perhaps, that very Thing we are ſo uneaſy for, may do

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us the moſt ſenſible Hurt, were we in Poſ- Serm
ſeſſion of it? XXI.

4thly, But farther, upon many Accounts, Reaſon teacheth us, in relation to God, to be content.

Because it is moſt reaſonable to acquieſce in God's Choice of our State: He being infinitely wiſer than we are, knows exactly what is beſt for us, and more truly loveth us, than we do ourſelves. Becauſe he can diſpoſe of us as he pleaſeth, and it is Madneſs to fret and be uneaſy at what we cannot help. And as ſuch Behaviour againſt God, doth highly offend, we may rather ſuſpect, that he will remove us into a worſe Condition, and augment our Evils, who are ſo diſcontented in our preſent Circumſtances.

Secondly, In relation to ourſelves: It is not only the moſt *reaſonable* Thing to be content, but we are in Duty obliged to be ſo.

By Nature we are indigent and helpleſs Creatures: We have nothing, that we can call our own; every Thing we have, flows from the everlaſting Fountain of Goodneſs; and, therefore, whatſoever Portion God

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God pleaſeth to allot us, we ought to be ſatisfied with.

UPON a moral Account we have leſs Reaſon to complain of any Thing, who deſerve nothing, who are continually offending and diſobeying our Lord and Maſter, our Creator and Preſerver. If we reflect upon the Wickedneſs of our Hearts, and Enormity of our Lives, we are even unworthy of the *Crumbs that fall from our Maſter's Table.* If we conſider our natural Infirmities, we ſhall acknowledge, that we are undeſerving the common Benefits which all Men enjoy: If we examine our Hearts, we muſt confeſs, that we deſerve to be deprived of every Thing we enjoy; and if we were better than we are, it would not be right to debate with him.

How impertinent muſt it be for ſuch great Debtors to complain at our Condition, who are ſuch great Sinners, and who have ſo baſely requited his Favour? How impudent muſt it be in us to complain, that we are not cloathed in Purple and fine Linen; that we are not regaled with the choiceſt Dainties, nor honour'd by the flattering Multitude; who deſerve not

not the leaſt Pittance, or the loweſt Regard? Such Creatures as we are, ſhould bluſh at the leaſt Thought of Diſſatisfaction, and bear with the moſt ſubmiſſive Patience every Thing that God ſhall pleaſe to lay upon us. We ſhould ſay with the Prophet, *I will bear the Indignation of the Lord, becauſe I have ſinned againſt him*; ſeeing whatever it is, it is leſs than we deſerve. Serm. XXI.

But if we will complain, we ſhould rather accuſe ourſelves, than exclaim againſt Providence; for the Evils we ſuffer, are not the Works of God, but the Effects of our own Sins: It is our Sins, that with-hold good Things from us, and becauſe of our Iniquities, that we are afflicted. We make it kind in God to chaſtiſe us, and then cry out at the Sharpneſs of the Suffering. Like Prodigals, we laviſh away our Eſtates in wild and wanton Profuſion, and then complain we want. But further,

May we not look upon ourſelves as the Servants of God? And is it right for Servants to pretend to pick and chuſe, what Office they will diſcharge in their Maſter's Houſhold? Without Doubt, it is not. It

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Serm. XXI. is our Duty to ſubmit to his Will, and acquieſce in his Diſpoſal of us; eſpecially, when we conſider, what Sort of Servants we are; who, when *we have done all Things commanded us*, muſt confeſs, *we are unprofitable Servants*; Perſons, that can add nothing to his Happineſs, or promote his Intereſt. The beſt of Men receive more Favours from the Hand of God, than the moſt perfect Service can demand; and therefore no one ought to preſcribe, in what Manner God ſhould reward him.

Again: If we conſider ourſelves as the Children of God by Adoption and Grace, how can we be diſcontented, who have ſuch Reaſon to hope, that we ſhall want no Manner of Thing that is proper for us? Is he not our Father, and is he not infinitely good? And if we know how to give good Things to our Children, can we be ſo weak, as to imagine, that our heavenly Father, a God of Goodneſs and Mercy, will not give us ſuch Things as are convenient for us to have?

If we conſider ourſelves as Chriſtians, we ſhould never be diſcontented; becauſe we have, as ſuch, not only the Promiſe of this Life, but of that which is to come:

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Whatſoever is needful and neceſſary for us, we may depend upon receiving; and though we may not have ſo much of this World as ſome have, we may content our Minds with the certain Hope of an Inheritance hereafter, which God hath laid up for thoſe that love him in Sincerity and Truth. One would think, that no Chriſtian ſhould ever be uneaſy, who hath ſuch a glorious Proſpect before him; and I am of Opinion, that they who are ſo diſconſolate at Diſappointments here, do not think, as they ought to do, of the future Reward that God hath promiſed to true Chriſtians; they muſt have ſome Suſpicions and Doubts, or they could not ſo deeply reſent and grieve at the trifling Evils of this Life. Serm. XXI.

Laſtly, As reaſonable Creatures, it is abſurd to be diſcontented; becauſe it is the Office of Reaſon to interpoſe in Afflictions, to ſhew us the Folly of grieving, where the Thing cannot be mended; and to encourage us to bear up bravely under the Weight of them. And if Reaſon be not given us for this Purpoſe, but only to make us ſenſible of our Misfortunes, without being able to cure them, we ſhall be more miſerable than

Serm. XXI. than any other Part of the Creation. But this was not the Design of God in making us rational: Our Reason was given us to support us; and if we follow its Directions, we shall never be discontented at whatsoever may befal us.

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SERMON XXII.

On CONTENTEDNESS.

PART II.

PHILIPP. iv. 11.

I have learned, in whatſoever State I am, therewith to be content.

IN diſcourſing further upon theſe Words, I will ſhew the Unreaſonableneſs of being diſcontented, let our State or Condition in the World be what it may. And, SERM. XXII.

1ſt, ARE we poor? What are the real Miſeries that ſhould make us ſo much out of Humour, and ſo reſtleſs in that Situation of Life?

THERE is no poor Man, that hath Hands and a Heart to work, but can provide himſelf with the real Neceſſaries of Life; and if

Serm. XXII. if he hath not ſuch delicate Fare as others have, his Labour hath furniſhed him with ſuch an Appetite, as makes his coarſe Food have a better Reliſh than the richeſt Man finds in all his Delicacies. And if the poor Man will but make an Obſervation, in the little Part of the World, with which he is acquainted, he will find, that many of his rich Neighbours have periſhed by ſurfeiting upon too much, for one poor Man that hath died for want of Bread.

If he is uneaſy that he is not attended with Multitudes, as the Rich are, let him conſider, what a Sort of Men ſuch Followers are; a Set of Sharpers and Paraſites, that buz round them in the Sun-ſhine of their Proſperity, but deſert them, after they have reduced them to Poverty: One friendly Hand of a poor Man, is more ſincere and more to be depended on, than a thouſand Cringes and Profeſſions of Friendſhip from ſuch Wretches. Poverty, then, ought not to be looked upon as ſo miſerable a State, as it generally is; ſince it is a Situation that God hath been pleaſed to allot to the Generality of Mankind; and what our Bleſſed

Saviour choſe, when he made his Appear- Serm. ance upon Earth. XXII.

Besides, the poor Man enjoys as many of the common Bleſſings of Life, as the Rich do: He enjoys ſuch Health, as is hardly ever ſeen in the Palaces of the Mighty; and *the Sleep of the labouring Man*, as the Son of *Sirach* obſerves, *is ſweet, whether he eat little or much.* If he hath but few Friends, he is happier in having fewer Enemies; for he is too low to be the Mark of Envy, and is in no Fear of loſing what few Men think worth taking up.

Upon the Whole: Tho' the poor Man may not be in the happieſt Condition of Life, yet he receives and enjoys ſo many natural Bleſſings of Providence, that, ſo far from having any Reaſon to repine, he hath a great many Reaſons to be content.

2dly, Another Cauſe of Diſcontent, is being unjuſtly ſlandered and defamed. And, without Doubt, there is nothing ſticks cloſer to a Man, than to loſe his Reputation, when he hath not merited the Reproach that is laid upon him. But then he ſhould conſider, that to be evil ſpoken of, is the common Fate of innocent Men; nay, that

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the beſt of Men, who have deſerved the greateſt Honour, have been expoſed to the utmoſt Contempt: For, as Falſhood is always an Enemy to Truth, ſo is Slander to Goodneſs. Our Saviour himſelf, who was an inimitable Example of ſpotleſs Innocence, had all the Blackneſs of Guilt thrown upon him, that the Malice and Spite of the World could load him with. ——And if he could not eſcape the Cenſure of Men, why ſhould we be ſo much out of Humour at their Revilings? Bold and lawleſs Tongues can never be reſtrained, and it is an Honour to be ill ſpoken of by them; we ſhould rather dread their Praiſe, becauſe none can have that, till they have done ſome baſe Action to deſerve it.

But further: As all Men are guilty of many Faults, and full of Imperfections, we ſhould improve what the Slanderer ſays unjuſtly of us, to our own Good, and endeavour to correct and amend the real Crimes we are guilty of, though the Defamer miſſed his Aim in the Charge he made againſt us; and then, inſtead of being angry with him, we ſhall love him, who

who hath been an Inſtrument of doing us ſo much Good, though he did not deſign it. SERM. XXII.

3*dly*, OTHERS are very uneaſy and diſquieted, that they have loſt their Friend, from whom they had ſo much to expect; not conſidering, that Almighty God is the greateſt of Friends, and never failed to ſerve any Man that properly and ſincerely aſked his Aſſiſtance; that he is all Fulneſs, and therefore cannot grudge what he gives us; that he is eternal, and therefore we cannot loſe him; that he is all Goodneſs, and therefore will not diſcard us from his Favour, as our Fellow-Creatures are too apt to do, becauſe we may have been wanting in ſome little Point of Duty or Reſpect to him.

HAVING ſuch a Friend, how dare we complain of the Greatneſs of our Loſs; eſpecially when we conſider, that he is not loſt for ever, but is only ſtepped before us to that happy Place, where nothing can abate any Thing of the Pleaſures he enjoys, but our long Abſence from him?

BUT ſuppoſing he was one of the beſt of Friends; if it was thy Goodneſs, thy Candour, and Honeſty, that made him ſo

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fond of thee, thoſe Qualifications will raiſe thee new ones, who will ſerve thee, by their Advice and Fortune, as far as he, whom thou haſt loſt; for good Men never want a Friend: Every one is willing to oblige them; and this Conſideration ſhould learn us to be ſatisfied.

Thus, if we judge of Things as we ought to do, we ſhould ſoon cure ourſelves of our Uneaſineſs: But we prejudice ourſelves againſt particular Things, and then judge ourſelves extremely unhappy when we feel them; whereas, would we but ſtate Things rightly, we ſhould find, that there is no Condition of Life ſo bad, but that, if we act wiſely and prudently, it may be not only ſupportable, but even comfortable too. But further:

Let us imagine our Caſe to be the worſt that can be; that we are utterly deprived of all the Comforts of this World; that we are ſtripped of our Wealth, Reputation, Friends and Health; yet, we cannot, even in theſe calamitous Circumſtances, have ſufficient Reaſon to be diſcontent; becauſe, let the World do its worſt, it cannot deprive us of our Reaſon, which

is of more Worth than all the World; and in the true Uſe of which, in theſe miſerable Circumſtances, we ſhall be more happy than the moſt fortunate Fool. We may alſo, by our pious Behaviour, have hope in God, and thereby have greater Aſſurance of our convenient Subſiſtence, than all preſent Poſſeſſions can beſtow. We have reſerved a free Acceſs to the Throne of Grace, and thereby a ſure Means of obtaining whatſoever is good for us. In a Word, we can enjoy God's Favour, by applying ourſelves to his Service, which tranſcends all other Enjoyments; and what Man can, in ſuch a bleſſed Condition, be ſaid to be poor or miſerable? Who would not rather call him rich, happy, and glorious? For how can he be poor, who hath God for his Portion for ever? How can he be deſpicable, who hath the Honour of being the Friend of the Moſt High? How can he be miſerable, who hath the Conſolations of God's Holy Spirit, to chear and revive him? Or how can he want, who is Heir of Heaven and everlaſting Happineſs? Serm. XXII.

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What, then, is it, that makes us ſo uneaſy? Is it the Pomps and Glories of this World? Is it the Want of theſe, that ſo frets and gauls us, that we cannot be content? If it be, were we perfect Men, we ſhould not regard or value any of theſe temporary Things, either good or evil; we ſhould, with St. *Paul*, ſtile any preſent, a *light Affliction*, and reckon, that the *Sufferings of the preſent Time are not worthy to be compared with the Glories that ſhall be revealed to us*; and we ſhould *greatly rejoice, though, for a Seaſon, we are in Heavineſs, through manifold Trials.*

For though Adverſity is, of all Things, that which Men bear the greateſt Averſion to; yet, in reality, nothing is more neceſſary and beneficial to us; nothing is more conducive to the Health of the Soul, or more productive of our real Happineſs. It diſciplines our giddy Minds, and improves them in the Knowledge of the beſt Things. Thus *David* owns to all the World, *It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy Statutes.* So the wiſe Man ſays, *By the Sadneſs of the Countenance, the Heart is made better.*

Adver-

Adversity also purifies and refines the Soul from its wicked Desires. *Gold is tried in the Fire, and acceptable Men in the Furnace of Adversity.* Serm. XXII.

It is the Method that God takes, out of Kindness and Love for his Creatures, to reclaim them from their Sins, and to make them love and serve him. So we are told, in Holy Scripture, that *Manasses*, that wicked King, *when he was in Affliction, besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his Fathers.* And of *Nebuchadnezzar* it is said, after God had drove him from his Kingdom, that *his Understanding returned unto him, and he blessed the Most High, and praised and honoured him that liveth for ever.*

It is also by Afflictions, that God prepares Men to be Partakers of the Kingdom of Heaven. *Our light Affliction, which is but for a Moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory.* And St. *Peter* bids us *greatly rejoice, though now, for a Season, if Need be, we are in Heaviness, through manifold Temptations: That the Trial of our Faith being much*

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more precious than of Gold that perisheth, tho' it be tried with the Fire, may be found unto Praise, and Honour, and Glory, at the Appearing of Jesus Christ. And, indeed, without Afflictions, it is hardly possible for Men to be either wise or good. They who have met with no Rubs and Vexations in the World, are ignorant of their own Strength. This Life is, as it were, a Sea; and the Man that hath not met with Storms and Tempests himself, can never be a good Pilot. It is by adverse Winds and hard Gales, that we improve our Knowledge, our Virtue, and our Industry. For how can that Man be said to be humble, patient, and content, who never knew what Disgrace, Necessities, or Pains are? Or how can a Man be charitable or compassionate to others, who never felt himself the Smart of Affliction, or the Cravings of Distress? For even our Saviour himself suffered Tribulation, that he thence might become *merciful*, and *disposed to succour the Afflicted.*

No Man can express much Piety or Love to God, who is not, in Submission to his Will, put to suffer any Thing grievous;

vous; nor can any one have any great Faith or Reliance on him, who never ſtood in any Need of his Aſſiſtance: And how ſhould any Man delight in him, and ſpiritual Pleaſures, whoſe Affections are taken up, by an Affluence of other Goods, and whoſe Appetites are glutted with the Enjoyment of other Delights? Nothing but a Deprivation of theſe Things, can ſhew the Vanity, the Deceitfulneſs and Uncertainty of them. Nothing but Diſappointments can withdraw our Minds and Affections from the preſent World, and make us place them, where we ought to do. SERM. XXII.

Now, ſince Adverſity is ſo good and proper for us, why ſhould we be ſo diſpleaſed and uneaſy at it? It is certainly our Friend, though a rough one, and gives us very ſincere, though rude, Admonitions. Let us not, therefore, be diſguſted at Providence, for Affliction and Poverty; for, if we conſult Experience, we ſhall find, that, as many Men have great Cauſe to lament, that they have been *rich*; ſo, many have great Reaſon to be glad, that they have been

Serm. XXII. been poor, and have tasted the bitter Cup of Affliction; since they have, from that, become wiser and better Men.

But let our State be what it will, we ought never to despair; since God hath obliged himself, by Promise, to take care of us, to support and succour us; and we have all the Reason in the World to believe, that we shall find Relief, as soon as ever God shall think it proper and convenient for us.

Let us not therefore grieve, as those who have no Hope: Let not our Minds be tossed with Solicitudes and Fears, but rather *hope, and wait quietly for the Salvation of the Lord.*

It is for want of this Confidence in God, that so many are uneasy about Futurity. But, what Folly is it to anticipate Evils, which we would avoid, and to pull down that Sorrow upon ourselves, which we would fly from? Let us rather follow this Advice of our Saviour, *Take no Thought for the Morrow:* Never forbode Evils before they come, but depend entirely upon the Divine Care for us, and we shall never be

be unhappy or diſcontented. For, how many Inſtances have we of Men, whom God hath, in a remarkable Manner, relieved from Wants and Diſtreſſes, and by thoſe unthought-of Friends and Aſſiſtances, which we ourſelves have found in the Day of our Calamity, when we were afraid that there was no Eye to pity us! Theſe are Proofs, that Providence is never wanting to ſuccour thoſe, that believe and depend upon him. Serm. XXII.

But ſuppoſe, that our Misfortunes continue, yet as we are mortal ourſelves, we know they muſt end. We have but a few Days to live, a ſmall Part of Time to paſs over; and when we ſhall have landed on Eternity, we ſhall be free from all the Troubles and Afflictions that now diſtreſs us. Death is a ſure Retreat from all that can torment us here, it wipes all Tears from our Eyes, and Diſquiet from our Hearts.

It is, therefore, but bearing a little longer our Uneaſineſſes; and Time will certainly cure us: We ſhall then be no more diſcontented; and, let the Senſe of it, now, make

Serm. XXII. make us patiently wait for the Coming of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

It is our Fondness for the Things of the World, that makes us so much grieve for the Want of them; but, these Thoughts of Death will make them appear quite otherwise.

We shall no longer dote on the World, when we consider *the World passeth away, and the Lust thereof.*

We shall not set our Hearts upon Riches, when we find they *cannot deliver from Death.*

SERMON XXIII.

The DUTY and BENEFIT of living peaceably.

ROM. xii. 18.

If it be poſſible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all Men.

WHOSOEVER ſeriouſly reflects upon the Chriſtian Doctrines, muſt ſoon be convinced, how well they are calculated for the Good and Happineſs of Mankind. SERM. XXIII.

ALL the Doctrines of Chriſt and his Apoſtles, tend to make Men good, and virtuous: They are full of Precepts of Love and Kindneſs, of Charity and Peace, towards all Men: So that whoſoever follows their Rules, is not only ſure of eternal Happineſs, when Death ſhall have removed him from this World; but to live

as

SERM. XXIII. as happy *here*, as the Condition and Mutability of human Affairs, will permit him to be.

THE Chriſtian Religion hath provided Remedies for all our turbulent Paſſions; and commands us to cultivate thoſe, that may be ſerviceable, either to ourſelves, or others: *Let your Love*, ſays St. *Paul*, in this Chapter, *be without Diſſimulation. Be kindly affectioned one to another, with brotherly Love, in Honour preferring one another. Provide Things honeſt in the Sight of all Men. And, if it be poſſible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all Men.*

IN diſcourſing upon theſe Words, I will endeavour to ſhew,

I. How much it is our *Duty*, to *live peaceably with all Men.*

II. THE *Benefits* that will ariſe to us, from ſuch a Behaviour.

III. WHAT is required, to make us of ſuch a Temper.

BUT

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BUT before I proceed to the *first* Particular, it will be neceſſary to premiſe, that St. *Paul* does not forbid all Contention, that may hinder our *living peaceably with all Men.* He commands us, *if it be poſſible, as much as lieth in you, to live peaceably with all Men:* But there are *Caſes*, when we may, and ought to contend; for Inſtance, when our Religion, or our Country, are attacked. Indeed, there are ſome Perſons, who condemn all War, as unlawful, and contrary to the Precepts of the Goſpel: And, in Truth, the Reaſons of the Generality of Wars, are ſuch, as might ſhame Chriſtian Princes to purſue them. But yet, when War is undertaken, for the Defence of Religion, our Lives and Liberties, it is not a Breach of this Command, to *live peaceably with all Men*; becauſe, if it were criminal to oppoſe ſuch Attempts, it would give deſigning and ambitious Princes, all the Advantages, they could wiſh for, to deſtroy the Happineſs, of their Fellow-Creatures; and make themſelves the Oppreſſors and Tyrants of Mankind. Without Doubt, to oppoſe ſuch Attempts, is juſt and honourable; and the Miſchiefs and Ruin, that

SERM. XXIII. that attend ſuch Things, can only be laid at the Door of the Aggreſſor. And, as we may enter into War, as a *publick Body*, for the Defence of ourſelves and Properties; ſo we may, in a *private Capacity*, without any Breach of that peaceable Temper, which Chriſtianity requires of us, defend ourſelves, when injured, and endeavour to obtain Juſtice. Indeed, our Bleſſed Saviour commands us, ſaying, *If any Man will ſue thee at the Law, and take away thy Coat, let him have thy Cloak alſo*: But this only means, either that Chriſtians ſhould rather ſuffer a ſmall and trivial Loſs, than endeavour to redreſs it this Way; or ſuffer ſuch a Loſs, rather than ſeek for a Reparation before an Heathen or *Jewiſh* Magiſtrate.

BUT where the Injury is great, we may honeſtly ſeek for Redreſs; or where it is of ſuch a Nature, that the Good of Society requires us to puniſh the Offender, in ſuch Caſes, the Laws of the Goſpel no where forbid us to do it. The Command of *rendering no Man Evil for Evil*, hath no Reſpect to ſuch Caſes, in which it is ſo far from *rendering Evil for Evil*, that it is doing

ing what we ought to do; and what, if not done, would deſtroy all human Society, and make the World a Den of Thieves and Robbers. SERM. XXIII.

ALL that the Apoſtle means, is, to exhort us to a peaceable and quiet Behaviour; and to avoid, as much as poſſible, all unneceſſary Diſputes and Contentions with our Fellow-Chriſtians.

THIS being premiſed, I proceed to ſhew,

I. How much it is our Duty, to *live peaceably with all Men.* Which will appear,

1ſt, FROM a Conſideration of ourſelves, as *Men.*

HE that ſeriouſly reflects upon himſelf, as an Individual of a Species, who are liable to a thouſand Miſtakes, expoſed to Variety of Temptations, and ſubject to many Inadvertencies and Errors, will naturally be inclined to overlook, and forgive, any unfriendly Action or Injury, he may receive from others; being conſcious, that he himſelf is made up of the ſame Materials and Paſſions, which, too often, hurry him on to commit many Imprudencies as well as they.

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HE will consider also, that as we are social Creatures, who cannot live without the mutual Assistance of each other, we are obliged to forgive one another, for our own Sakes and Welfare, as well as theirs. And to this End, God hath implanted this Inclination in our Frame and Constitution, which will move us to Actions of Tenderness, and Good-Nature, till we have destroyed its Power by Depravity and Wickedness.

BESIDES, it is but common Justice to be kind and compassionate to others; because, when we are in Distress ourselves, we think we have a Right to demand Commiseration in our Misfortunes, and Relief in our Wants; and are ready to complain of Cruelty and Inhumanity, if it be refused us: Upon which Account, we should be willing to pay the same Love, Assistance and Comfort to others, that we think just and equitable to demand in the same Circumstances.

BUT further: Our mutual Interest and Advantage, the very Peace and Quiet of our Lives, is preserved by a friendly Behaviour to all Men. The greatest Man alive sometimes stands in Need of the Assistance

of others; and there is no Man, whose Good-Will we may not want, and of whose good Word we may not ſtand in Need; and whoſe Hatred and Malice may not blaſt our Credit, and raiſe up many Enemies to torment and vex us. For which Reaſon, every wiſe Man would, by a kind and affectionate Behaviour, purchaſe the Love and Eſteem of all Men. SERM. XXIII.

BESIDES, by ſuch civil and obliging Carriage, ſuch friendly and humane Treatment, we have it in our Power to do a great deal of Good; Gentleneſs and Good-Nature, being the ſureſt Method of ſoftening and reconciling peeviſh and paſſionate Men. Advices and Admonitions of a Friend, inſinuate deep into the Heart, and are more prevalent, than the ſtrongeſt Demonſtration, and moſt powerful Eloquence of an Enemy. But,

2*dly*, IF we have brought ourſelves to be ſo inhumane, as to have loſt our natural Propenſions; yet Chriſtianity obligeth us, unleſs we have diſcarded that alſo, to this friendly Temper of Mind. Our Saviour hath made it the diſtinguiſhing Character, by which his Diſciples ſhould be known:

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By this ſhall all Men know, that ye are my Diſciples, if ye have Love one to another [a]: As he came to reconcile Men to God, ſo he commanded, that we ſhould be reconciled one to another. All the Time he was executing his miniſterial Office, he went about doing Good; forgave all the Indignities and ill Treatment, he received from bad Men; and hath left us an Example, that we ſhould follow his Steps. To bear an Affection for thoſe only, from whom we have received Favours; or to love thoſe only, who are related to us, will by no Means evidence that we are Chriſtians: Common Humanity, and Gratitude, oblige the worſt of Men to bear an Affection for their Relations and Benefactors; and if we do no more, our Lord informs us, that we ſhall have no Reward; for *Publicans* and *Sinners*, that is, Men of the worſt Characters and Diſpoſitions, do the ſame.

OUR Saviour's Diſciples and Followers were governed by the ſame Spirit that he was; *who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; but committed the Thing to him that judgeth*

[a] *John* xiii. 35.

judgeth righteouſly. And, if this Behaviour doth not appear in us, as a Tree is known by its Fruit, ſo we may know by this, what Spirit we are of: We may imagine, perhaps, that we are Chriſtians; but, unleſs we bring forth the Fruits of Chriſtianity, *Love, Peace, Gentleneſs, Long-ſuffering, Meekneſs,* and the like, which are indiſpenſable Ingredients in the Character of a true Chriſtian, we may call ourſelves by what Name we pleaſe, but it will profit us nothing. SERM. XXIII.

As Chriſtians, we are obliged to bear a Good-Will to all Men; to rejoice in their Proſperity, and to commiſerate their Misfortunes; but unleſs we love them by Principle, how can this be done? For, it is Love that knits and cements Men together in Society; it is this friendly and divine Diſpoſition of Mind, that prompts us to do ſo many good and kind Acts to one another; and to forgive one another thoſe Miſtakes, we are all committing in our Turns. And, therefore, our Saviour obligeth us to this mutual Love, that we may be the readier to perform all kind Offices of Humanity; to miniſter to thoſe, who are in Want; and to comfort and relieve them, according to the beſt of our Power.

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AND, to urge us farther to this friendly and humane Temper, we have the Example of Almighty God himſelf, who is the greateſt Lover of Mankind, never willingly grieving and afflicting his Creatures; but, on the other Hand, compaſſionating their Miſeries, relieving their Diſtreſſes, and delighting to promote their Happineſs: Who, with an indifferent, unlimited Bounty, diſpenſeth his Bleſſings, cauſing his Sun to ſhine, and his refreſhing Showers to deſcend upon the Earth; and all his Elements to miniſter Joy and Satisfaction, even to the moſt impious and ungrateful of his Creatures: Who, with inexpreſſible Forbearance, overlooks the Violation of his Laws, and the contemptuous Neglect of his infinite Goodneſs: Who, in a Word, waits with Patience for the Repentance, courts the Amity, and in a Manner ſolicits the Good-Will of his moſt inveterate Enemies. This is the Example, that God gives us; and this friendly Diſpoſition, if duly cultivated in us, will incline us to uſe all Men with Civility and Reſpect; to give them that Honour, that their Station in Life demands from us; and to do nothing, that, in any Reſpect,

Reſpect, tends to the Diſquiet and Diſturbance of Society. SERM. XXIII.

It will, alſo, never ſuffer us to uſe any reproachful or provoking Language, being conſcious that ſuch Behaviour is contrary to our chriſtian Profeſſion, and makes great Confuſion and Diſturbance in the World: For *the Wounds of the Tongue are like the Piercings of a Sword, and are more incurable than the Wounds of the moſt invenomed Weapon.*

Thus much for the Obligation we lie under, *to live peaceably with all Men.* I come, in the next Place,

II. To ſhew the Benefits and Advantages, that will ariſe to us from ſuch a Behaviour.

The Bleſſing, which our Saviour pronounced to a meek Diſpoſition, was, that it ſhould *inherit the Earth*; which it does in the beſt Senſe of the Expreſſion, by making the Poſſeſſors of it live happily and comfortably in the World, beloved of all that know them, and bleſſed by every one that hears of them: Whereas, a paſſionate, revengeful Perſon is always unhappy; every body that knows him, is upon his

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Guard; nay, often takes a Pleaſure in vexing and oppoſing him; which, added to his own reſtleſs Temper, makes him as miſerable to himſelf, as he is troubleſome to other Men. But, the quiet, peaceable Man commands the Regard and Eſteem of all; every one is willing to aſſiſt him; and he is ſure to have the Love and Protection of every wiſe and good Man, from the Benefit, that both they and Society in general receive from him.

AND, if we add to this, the Satisfaction that ſuch a Man feels within himſelf, at his being inſtrumental to promote the Good and Happineſs of Mankind, I need add nothing more to recommend ſuch a peaceable Behaviour to your Imitation: And, therefore, ſhall,

III. PROCEED to ſhew, what is neceſſarily required, in order to make us of this peaceable Temper of Mind.

THE firſt *Requiſite* is to be free from *Ambition*: For, as the Man, who is infected with this Paſſion, cannot be happy himſelf, let his Circumſtances or Fortune be ever ſo great; ſo, neither can he behave himſelf quietly

quietly and peaceably towards other Men: His aſpiring Mind will be continually thirſting after ſomething unpoſſeſſed, and create a thouſand Diſturbances, in order to obtain it. SERM. XXIII.

THE firſt Appearance of this *reſtleſs Paſſion* was in Heaven, where it occaſioned great Confuſion, till it was driven thence; and on Earth it is continually diſturbing the Peace and Happineſs of Mankind.

WHEN it infatuates the Breaſts of Princes, it occaſions the Riſing up of Nation againſt Nation, puſhes them into many bloody and unneceſſary Wars, depopulates the moſt flouriſhing Kingdoms, and ſpreads an univerſal Ruin and Deſolation round about it.

WHEN it moves in a lower Sphere, how many Arts and Contrivances are made uſe of, to ſatisfy its Deſires? And what a Number of Shapes and Forms does it not aſſume to compleat its Wiſhes?

SOMETIMES it uſurps the amiable Character of the *Patriot*, and, under an affected Concern for the *Publick Good*, raiſes Suſpicions, and foments Animoſities among the People.

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At other Times it wears the Appearance of Friendſhip, and under that unſuſpected Shape deceives the Credulous, to advance itſelf upon the Ruin and Deſtruction of thoſe, who truſted to, and confided in her.

But, if Men would have a low and humble Opinion of their Abilities, and be content in the Station that God hath placed them; this would keep them in the proper Bounds of their own Buſineſs, and never ſuffer them to be impertinently inquiſitive into what doth not belong to them, and of which they cannot be competent Judges. It would preſerve them from the Folly of Self-Admiration; nor ſuffer them to think, that they have Injuſtice done them, becauſe they are not more regarded and honoured in the World. *Solomon* tells us, that, *He that is of a proud Heart, ſtirreth up Strife*[a]. Such Diſpoſitions and Tempers naturally make thoſe, who are curſed with them, conceive too high an Opinion of themſelves; and whoſoever makes ſuch a falſe Eſtimate of his own Worth, will become troubleſome and impertinent; intruding his own Sentiments as certain Truths, and diſobliging every one about

[a] *Prov.* xxviii. 25.

about him. If he is *in Employments*, he is haughty, and overbearing; in a *private Station*, *ſpeaking Evil of Dignities*, and encouraging Rumours, to the Diſturbance of the *publick Peace*. SERM. XXIII.

WHEREAS, would we follow the Apoſtle's Advice, *To eſteem others better than ourſelves*, we ſhould be better Chriſtians and more valuable Men; Society would be more eaſy, and we ourſelves live more quiet and happy.

ANOTHER *Requiſite* to make us of this peaceable Temper of Mind, is to avoid being influenced by any Conſideration of *Self-Intereſt*.

As *Money is the Root of all Evil*, ſo the covetous Man will conſtantly be bringing forth the Fruits of it. That inordinate Deſire of increaſing his Subſtance, will tempt him to defraud upon every Opportunity given him; and the more conſiderable he is in the World, the more dangerous he becomes.

WHEREAS the generous Man, in all Conditions, is a *publick Bleſſing*: Both Society and every Individual is the better for him; and as often as it is in his Power to promote the Happineſs of his Fellow-Subjects,

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jects, or his Country, he feels as much Pleasure in doing it, as either of them will be the better for it. He is not at all uneasy that others are preferred before him, but endeavours, by the Good he does Society in general, to make his private Station a *Post* of Honour.

BUT the most certain Method to make us live peaceably with all Men, is to govern our Wills, and other Faculties, according to the Rule of right Reason; that is, in other Words, to be good and religious Men. *From whence*, says St. *James*[a], *come Wars and Fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your Lusts, that war in your Members?* These are the unhappy Causes of all private and publick Contentions; and, as long as Men suffer themselves to be governed by them, it is in vain for them ever to think of being happy. But, when Reason presides; when a Restraint is laid upon our Passions and Appetites, and a just Sense of Religion guides our Actions, every Thing that is good may be expected from us. We shall then *render*, according to the Exhortation of the Apostle, *to every one his Due*: To our

[a] *James* iv. 1.

our *Inferiors*, we ſhall expreſs ourſelves with Courteſy and Good-Nature; to our *Equals*, with Civility and Reſpect; to our *Superiors*, with a proper Deference and Submiſſion, living peaceably and quietly under their Government, and contributing willingly towards its Support. SERM. XXIII.

THESE are ſome of the Qualifications, that are required to make us of this peaceable Temper of Mind, recommended by the Apoſtle.

AND as an Inducement to poſſeſs ourſelves of them, we ſhould conſider, *how good and pleaſant a Thing it is, to live together in Unity*; and how delightful Converſation and Friendſhip is, that is maintained with mutual Confidence and Civility. The Lives of ſuch Men are extremely agreeable and happy, who are neither deviſing Miſchief againſt others, nor fearing any to be contrived againſt them; their Minds are eaſy, their Countenances chearful, and their Sleep ſweet.

ON the contrary, how miſerable is it to be in a State of Contention and Enmity, to have the Mind on a continual Wreck, the Heart full of Fears and Diſtruſt, and the Paſſions raging with Malice and Revenge?

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venge? This is to feel Part of the Hell and Punishment of the Damned; while the Condition of the peaceful Man, is a Representation and Foretaste of Heaven; into which no unquiet Thing can enter, and whose Happiness, in Part, consists in the friendly Society and Conversation of Men and Angels. Again,

As nothing is more delightful, so nothing is more becoming human Nature, than to live peaceably. Rage and Fierceness may become the Character of the wild Beast; but Reason and Discretion is the Glory of Man: And it is the greatest Disgrace to any one, who is endowed with such excellent Perfections, to misapply them in turbulent and vexatious Disputes. How much nobler is it to calm the Rage of Contention, and to end the Quarrels of outragious Men? How amiable and becoming human Nature is it, to compose Animosities, and remove all Grudges and Heart-burnings, by Courtesy and Condescension?

LOVE, Meekness, Gentleness, and Patience, are the genuine Fruits of the Holy Spirit; but Emulation, Hatred, Variance, and Strife, are the Offspring of earthly Lusts,

Lusts, and deviliſh Paſſions. *If you have bitter Wrath and Strife in your Hearts, glory not: This Wiſdom deſcendeth not from above, but is earthly, ſenſual, deviliſh.* Every Thing of this Sort is from the worſt of Beings, the great Enemy and Deceiver of Mankind; and how ſad is it to imitate him in ſuch Practices, as are deteſted by good Men, and abhorred of God! SERM. XXIII.

THUS I have ſhewn you, in as few Words as I could, the Duty we all lie under, to live peaceably with all Men; the Benefits that attend the Practice of it; and the Methods we are to take to do it. And, may the merciful Creator and Preſerver of all Things infuſe into our Hearts thoſe heavenly Graces of Meekneſs and Patience, that we may quietly ſerve him here, and, in a bliſsful Reſt, praiſe and magnify him for ever hereafter.

To whom, with the Son and Holy Ghoſt, be all Honour, Glory, and Praiſe, for ever and ever. Amen.

The End of the Firſt VOLUME.

MVSEVM
BRITAN
NICVM